THE IMPACT OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION ON SCOTTISH RELIGIOUS LIFE AND THOUGHT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THOMAS CHALMERS ROBERT HALDANE AND NEIL DOUGLAS

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Graduate Faculty

Edinburgh University

In Partial Fulfilment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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1951

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

The body of this work consists of studies in the French revolutionary background of religious developments in Scotland, as these developments are exemplified in three Scottish religious leaders.

The French Revolution may be thought of as a series of events which extended from July 14, 1789, to about the end of the eighteenth century, and which were directed, successively, by a rather colorful array of personalities. But no serious student of the period will be content, or able, to regard it so simply, for the reason that in a profound sense the Revolution was 'born not made'; it was the eruption of a vast complex of forces which had for a long time been at work in France and throughout Europe; it was 'will and idea' as well as concrete fact. To study the influence of the French Revolution upon contemporary religious life and thought in Britain (or upon a segment of Scottish religious life and thought) is, for the student of ideas, to study the larger movement of ideas and dynamic forces, of which the events in France were the most dramatic expression. A momentous challenge confronted religious leaders in the closing years of the eighteenth century. How was this challenge met? What were the repercussions in personal religious experience? These are the central questions with which the following studies will be primarily concerned.

Dr. Henry W. Meikle's exhaustive work, Scotland and the French Revolution, explores the general effects of the Revolution upon the social, political, and ecclesiastical life of Scotland. The studies which follow here are, in one sense, an elaboration of the last Chapter ("The Church and the French Revolution") of Dr. Meikle's book. However, the present work is, by and large, confined to the lives and works of three Scottish religious leaders who were more or less typical of the respective religious groups to which each belonged. Chalmers, Haldane, and Douglas were all Evangelicals; in this, and in other respects, their ministries overlapped. But they were quite distinct from each other. So, the three studies which follow are really separate, though the differences in age, native temperament, and background, together with the contrasting and complementary responses (to the revolutionary challenge) do give a natural continuity to the whole.

The nature and extent of the treatment in each study is determined more by the nature of the source materials, and the inclinations and interests of the writer, than by the over-all plan. For instance, two Chapters are devoted to Neil Douglas, and only one each to Chalmers and Haldane. The reason for this is that, while Chalmers and Haldane occupy more prominent places in nineteenth and twentieth century Scottish Church History, Neil Douglas was more involved than either of them in the events and trends

of the French revolutionary period. Also, except for a brief (and much too sympathetic) biographical account by John Fraser in The Universalist, there does not exist a biographical account of Douglas, or any comprehensive evaluation of his writings and activities. Chapters V and VI, following, will (it is hoped) show that Douglas played a significant part in the modern beginnings of Christian, social and political action in Scotland. These Chapters are more factual than the earlier sections.

The most difficult and yet the most intriguing part of this investigation has been Chapter III. Though a great deal has been written about Chalmers's life and work, very little of the material deals with the man and his writings in relation to the revolutionary ferment of the time. A part of Chapter III is a psychology of religious experience. The conclusions here are tentative and merely suggestive, but some such treatment seemed to be required.

The book which has been of most help throughout this research is Dr. Meikle's Scotland and the French Revolution. It has been an invaluable aid, both directly, in showing the influence of the French Revolution on Scotland, and indirectly, in guiding me to the relevant sources of information. The books which have influenced the approach to this study are mainly two: Professor Basil Willey's The Eighteenth Century Background, and Professor A. E.

Lovejoy's *The Great Chain of Being*.

I am especially indebted to my advisers, Professor Hugh Watt, D. D., D. Litt., former Principal of New College, and Professor J. H. S. Burleigh, B. Litt., D. D., of New College, for their helpful suggestions and criticisms.

Chapter I

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION, EVANGELICALISM, AND THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE

The French Revolution was the consequence of a vast, complex chain of events, the abuse of power and privilege by the upper and ruling classes, and the desperation of the suffering masses of France. It was all this and more besides. Ideologically, it was the dramatic, violent outcome of the gradual development of freedom and the idea of progress.

The great problem of all societies and all governments has been to combine personal freedom and social flexibility with the correlative ideal of cooperation for the common good. Since the French Revolution, this problem has taken a new turn. The rise of the masses to power has brought into the foreground the need for order and collective security. This has become a grave problem. But it was not regarded as such by the French Encyclopaedists, the propounders and popularizers of revolutionary freedom and the idea of progress. They held that society needed no other security, after it had been delivered from the tyranny of priestcraft, than the internalization of reason. This teaching, and the Revolution which it made possible, were not to be underrated or left to go unchallenged in England; they were met squarely

by Edmund Burke. The Kingdom of Heaven, according to Burke, was not within the individual--nor was it likely to be. And it did not come by ingenious reasoning. It was to be found, if at all, outside, in the historical, organic structure; it was a precious, living, growing product of a people's whole historical life. And it could be snuffed out by the rash hand of the innovator. A fierce battle of convictions was thus fought out, before and during the events which followed the fall of the Bastille on July 14, 1789. England and Scotland, as well as most of the Continental countries, were drawn into the struggle.

After more than a century it is not difficult to point out gross errors in some of the principles which informed the eighteenth century philosophical rebels, such as, the notion that the present was sufficient unto itself without the past, and their belief in the perfectibility of a malleable human nature. But if these were weaknesses they were also strength in the struggle against feudal absolutism. They were the necessary ideological explosives which, for better and for worse, sundered the old world from the new, in the space of three dramatic decades. The new philosophers, in France and in Great Britain, inspired enthusiasm with their ideas. Their enthusiasm was infectious, and it was itself coloured and enlarged by other currents of thinking and feeling. This chapter will show something of the interrelation of these dynamic forces.

Optimism and Reaction in Great Britain

In England, and after 1792 in Scotland, the social milieu was widely and profoundly affected by political discussion growing out of indigenous revolutionary ferment, the American War of Independence, and especially by the Revolution in France. All branches of learning and every area of living were stirred. Literary activity took on new life and increased in volume and in fervour as the Revolution progressed:

> The work of no literary period in English history has been more deeply affected by political discussion and an examination of the principles and conduct of government than the last decade of the eighteenth century.[1]

Romantic optimism. For this study, the revolutionary period may be divided into two parts: The first begins with the fall of the Bastille (July, 1789) and extends roughly to the 'reign of terror' in France, and the trial of Thomas Muir in Scotland (January, 1793); the second extends from 1793 to the end of the Directory in 1799. The first period was, on the whole, one of enthusiasm and romantic hopefulness. The philosophers, Locke, David Hume, and the French philosophes had succeeded in 'softening up'

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[1] M. R. Adams, Studies in the Literary Background of English Radicalism, pp. 5, 6.

the "optimism of acceptance"[1] of an unjust, oppressive status quo. Now, at last, the real attack was launched; it had been comparatively bloodless, and it was successful. To some Englishmen the Revolution meant the end of France as a threat to British power, but, in the main, the results appeared, on both sides of the Channel, to be exceedingly promising, both for France and for her neighbors. To a great many young intellectuals in England, the Revolution was the incarnation of ideal liberty, fraternity, and justice. Philosophical speculation had at last taken a practical shape in the affairs of men. The early tingle of excitement which was felt, more or less, throughout many British circles during the interval between the fall of the Bastille and the publication of Burke's Reflections on the French Revolution, in November, 1790, has been described by Adams as "perhaps the happiest in the memory of civilized man."[2] Hazlitt, whose lines later recalled so much of the spontaneous enthusiasm, wrote of the period:

> A new world was opening to the astonished sight. Scenes lovely as hope can paint dawned on the imagination; visions of unsullied bliss lulled the senses, and hid the darkness of surrounding objects, rising in bright succession and endless gradations, like the steps of that ladder which was set up on earth, and whose top reached to heaven. Nothing was too mighty for this now-begotten hope: and the path that led to human happiness seemed as plain--as the pictures in the Pilgrim's Progress leading to Paradise. Imagination was unable to keep up with the gigantic strides of reason, and the strongest faith fell short of the

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1 Basil Willey, The Eighteenth Century Background, p.43.
2 Adams, op. cit., p. 7

> supposed reality. The anticipation of what men were to become, could not but have an influence on what they were . . . .The curb of prudence was taken off; nor was it thought that a zeal for what was right could be carried to excess.[1]

As Adams pointedly puts it, "The mind of awakened man went a-venturing and youth found its romance in radicalism."[2]

This romantic upsurge was more widespread in England than in Scotland; but in the latter country, young intellectuals were swept from their traditional moorings by the same tide. Young Francis Jeffrey, just ready to be admitted to the Scottish bar, wonders if he may not have to give it up for some more adventurous pursuit--"I have deep presages that the law will not hold me."[3] The romantic adventures of Robert Burns and his friends are well known. The letters of John (later Sir John) Leslie to James Brown (later Dr. Brown of St. Andrews) give us further insight into the strength of these centrifugal, psychological gales.[4]

Triumph of reaction. But the flush of optimism and radical discontent, which came in such gushes, soon spent itself, or turned into something quite different. The sanguinary turn of affairs in France (the second phase of the Revolution) quickly dashed the hopes of a great many of the hopeful in England and Scotland. Others, like Wordsworth and

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1 The life of Thomas Holcroft (re-edited by E. Colby), vol. ii, p. 9.
2 Op. cit., p. 8
3 See Lord Cockburn's Life of Jeffrey, p. 60.
4 See Appendix A.

Leslie, held out longer with desperate tenacity, hoping against hope that the Revolution would right itself. But gradually the community of radicals dwindled; Tom Paine and William Godwin, erstwhile arsenals of radical agitation, became public enemies number one and number two respectively. By the end of the century, thanks to Napoleon, the conquest of reaction over the rebels was complete, except for isolated voices which continued to repeat the vain words and phrases about 'liberty', and the need for reform. Hazlitt has again given a graphic account of the degeneration of humanitarian hope into indifference:

> Kind feelings and generous actions there always have been, and there always will be, while the intercourse of mankind shall endure; but the hope that such feelings and such actions might become universal, rose and set with the French Revolution. That light seems to have been extinguished for ever in this respect. The French Revolution was the only match that ever took place between philosophy and experience: and waking from the trance of theory to the sense of reality, we hear the words, truth, reason, virtue, liberty [italics in original], with the same indifference or contempt, that the cynic who has married a jilt or a termagant, listens to the rhapsodies of lovers.[1]

By 1800, there was hardly the need or the will to continue the polemic against the exiled or ostracised fomenters of radical agitation. Their undoing was a fait accompli.

Closely related to these social and political developments were the rise and spread of literary Romanticism

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[1] Op. cit., p. 93.

and Protestant Evangelicalism (or Pietism). Throughout the revolutionary period these movements act and interact; not infrequently their manifestations are indistinguishable.

Evangelicalism and the Late Eighteenth Century

Evangelicalism and Romantic sentimentalism. Continental Pietism and the Evangelical Revival in Great Britain and America constitute one of many ideological and emotional currents which emerged during the eighteenth century and gradually increased in scope and in force as the century wore on. John Wesley and George Whitefield are not always given the consideration they deserve by secular historians. Wesley was no political innovator; he did not, it seems, consciously break with the Augustan tradition. And yet, Professor Willey numbers him among those who rebelled against the social and ecclesiastical status quo.[1] That this was in fact the end-result of the Methodist movement, we may be reasonably certain, despite the conservative affirmations and intentions of Wesley and his disciples.

Methodism, says one writer, was "born romantically and itself [gave] birth to romantic elements."[2] The forerunners of the English and Scottish poets and prose writers were the Evangelical preachers and the poets William Cowper

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[1] Op. cit., p. 55

[2] Frederick C. Gill, The Romantic Movement and Methodism, p. 23.

and Charles Wesley. Under the impact of the fervent preaching of the Methodists and the lyrical passion, sincerity, and spontaneity of their hymns, the dry,'decent moderation' of the Augustans gradually gave way to an atmosphere of passion and enthusiasm:

> The hard crust of apathy and artificiality, not only in religion but in literature, and later in industry and politics, began to crumble. Winter gave way to spring. The frosty couplets of Dryden and Pope were followed by the lyrics of Charles Wesley, the sweetness of Collins, the richness of Christopher Smart, the warmth and delicacy of Cowper, the rare beauty and genius of Blake. Long before Wordsworth and Coleridge, the snows were melting.[1]

"In preaching a religious revival the Wesleys brought about a psychological revolution,"[2] and when the romantic writers appeared they found an audience already trained to understand them. This is not to say that Romanticism was simply a projection or poetic elaboration of Evangelicalism, or that the latter was a necessary precursor of the former. But Romanticism, as we know it historically, emerged when it did and as it did largely because the Methodists and their friends had gone before and broken the fallow ground. The emotional stream which grew in width and depth throughout most of the eighteenth century was increased by the Methodists. Evangelicalism fed and was fed by it. It is, perhaps, too much to say, as one writer does, that, "The alchemy that

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1 Ibid, pp. 23, 24.

2 London Quarterly, 1935; see article by F. B. Harvey, 'Methodism and the Romantic Movement', p. 295.

sublimated Fielding into Thackeray and Smollett into Dickens was mainly Evangelicalism."[1] But the note of 'rapture' which distinguishes the novelists of the nineteenth century from their early eighteenth century predecessors does have a close affinity with Evangelical emotionalism. In both cases there was the dominant element of tragedy transmuted into triumph. The former must precede the latter: the soul cannot find peace with God, or with itself, until it has experienced the pain of exile. But such an awareness is a sure prelude to a re-union--such a re-union which transcends and makes meaningful the tragedy of life.

Political unrest. Gill points out that Evangelicalism helped to feed the new emotional stream in the following ways: First, it added its strength to the early stirrings of the Romantic impulse. Thus, by giving to rather superficial or floundering sentiments a religious orientation it deepened, strengthened, and helped to direct them. Secondly, it "filtered the new stream, to which it had itself so largely contributed through its many new and rapidly increasing agencies, into almost every part of English life."[2] This it did through the distribution of cheap books and popular magazines, the organizing of Sunday Schools, and by providing and getting the people to sing emotional hymns. Thus, Wesley,

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1 Ibid, p. 301.
2 Gill, op. cit., pp. 29 ff.

Whitefield, and their younger Evangelical friends--Hannah More, Wilberforce, and others in England--"helped to dig the new literary channel."[1] Unwittingly, they created an intense and widespread demand for Romantic literature. The highly intellectual art and religion of the earlier eighteenth century had failed miserably to satisfy the needs of the great masses of people. It was inevitable that the passionate preaching of Whitefield and John Wesley, and the quiet ardour of Cowper and Charles Wesley, should, in time, generate a contagious excitement.

Such creative excitement was, of course, not confined to religion and literature. Many streams of strong feeling converged in this age of religious, literary, and industrial ferment. From many quarters there came the cry of liberty, independence, and the craving for self-realization. Men were slowly becoming aware of their worth, their individuality, their 'rights'. It was not necessary that labourers should be able to explain these intuitions and strong emotions; it was sufficient that the feelings should find some concrete, individual and social expression. The Methodist Meetings, and especially the hymns ("O Jesu, Lover of Mankind", "Jesu, Lover of My Soul", and others), provided just such an opportunity. All could enter fully into the experience. And they did. Multitudes of common

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[1] Loc. cit.

labourers sang the hymns "with tears streaming down their faces and hearts strangely moved."[1] It was thus that the spiritual awakening encouraged and hastened the later trends in favour of political democracy and humanitarian reform. Negatively, it intensified lower-class discontent with the established orders; it was, in large measure, because of the Methodist revolt against drunkenness, immorality, ignorance, poverty, and 'dry religion', together with the enthusiasm engendered thereby, that the "Augustan pyramid"[2] was brought to the ground. Positively, the Methodist gospel of sin and salvation (all men are equally in need of grace, and in the eyes of God all the redeemed are of equal worth), like the original Calvinistic doctrines of election and the 'calling', helped to strengthened the new idea of personality which was then emerging in Great Britain and America. That Evangelicalism lacked the strong intellectual structure of Calvinism, and that its principles and its social accomplishments were therefore fluid and ephemeral, does not alter the fact that during the latter half of the eighteenth century its influence was considerable. This must be appreciated before one can adequately appraise the impact of the revolutionary movement on Evangelicalism.

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1 Ibid, p. 32.
2 Quoted in Gill, loc. cit.

Sabbath Schools and missions. By means of their Sunday Schools for the children of the poor, the Methodists greatly extended and popularized their ideas. These schools for reading, writing, and good conduct spread fast throughout England, Scotland, and Wales. After ten years, thousands of children who would otherwise have grown up illiterate, learned to read, first the Bible, and then other books and newspapers. The pupils needed little coaxing to attend:

> [The children] came rushing, stayed long hours, attended services, and some carried their books to the factories to study in odd minutes. They even washed their faces and combed their hair to get in. . . . These schools raised the general culture of the English people and also affected the politics of the nation, for though the leaders designed the instruction to teach the working class to be obedient to their betters, it is not clear that this was the result. Children who could read the Bible could later read Tom Paine and Wilkes, and many did.[italics not in original].[1]

Similar results attended the organizing of Sunday Schools in Scotland by the Haldanes and their associates, as we shall see.

Besides the Sunday School movement, there was also the growing concern, on the Continent and in Great Britain, to make Christianity known in other, non-Christian lands--a concern which was mingled with the desire to alleviate the physical misery of the 'heathen'. The modern Protestant missionary movement was really launched by the Pietists

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[1] Mary A. Hopkins, Hannah More and Her Circle, p. 161.

in Germany. The Challenge was later taken up in England by Carey and the London Missionary Society (1792-3), and shortly afterwards two similar societies were formed in Scotland.

Professor Warneck has shown that, despite its strategy of withdrawal from the world, Pietism with its missionary zeal and activity added something to radical, secular reform; and it is clear that the early missionary experiment was not unresponsive to the political experiments taking place in America and in France at the close of the eighteenth century. The importance which the missionary enthusiasts attached to conversion, and the absolute necessity of good works as a consequence of the conversion experience, issued in an intense activity (similar to that of original, Genevan Calvinism), which became an overpowering compulsion to embrace the whole world with the love of Christ. Thus, these pietistic, activistic movements, within and outside the Established Churches, helped to stir the ferment of discontent with old, established ways and institutions, secular as well as religious; conversely, Christian missions were deeply affected by revolutionary ideas and events. That there was in Scotland this interaction and interpenetration of the two movements--the one secular, the other religious--we shall see when we come to study the lives and works of Robert Haldane and Neil Douglas.

Prof. Warneck has pointed out the influence of the American War of Independence and the French Revolution on the early progress of missions, generally. The cause of missions was stimulated, first, by the idea of political freedom; and even more by the "idea of humanity, which proclaimed the common rights of man."[1]

> Revolutionary as these ideas were, and little based on religion as was the advocacy of common human rights, yet they rendered preparatory service to the missionary movement by bringing about, in connection with Rousseau's ideals of nature, a change in the estimate of non-Christian and uncivilized humanity, and by making it materially easier for Christian circles to assert the right of all men to the Gospel also. The old view of the brutishness of the heathen and of their susceptibility to conversion yielded to a Christian optimism, which regarded them in all their degradation as brethren capable of being saved and needing to be saved.[2]

When the young 'enthusiasts' were refused a place in the official Churches, no other course was open to them but to go forth independently; "And thus of dire necessity there was born within the Protestant world that free association which was thenceforth to play in its history a rôle of eminent importance."[3] These free, missionary societies became, more and more, naturalized outlets for the activities of Christian concern in the Church at home.

But the missionary societies in Britain attracted much of the fervour of non-religious societies. Various

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1 Gustav Warneck, History of Christian Missions, p.67.
2 Ibid, pp. 67, 68.
3 Ibid, p. 82.

students of the period[1] have suggested that Methodism (or Evangelicalism) perhaps did most to forestall a 'French' Revolution in Britain by draining off, or transmuting, the radical enthusiasm of the masses into semi-respectable religious enthusiasm. This is quite possibly correct. However, it should be remembered that the Evangelical revivals, the vast network of socio-religious Sunday Schools, and the nascent missionary enterprise, activated fresh and highly-charged feelings, which not infrequently found their way, consciously or unconsciously, back into non-religious channels. The Government had some grounds for feeling that the Evangelical 'Wild Party' was actually helping along the associations for radical, political reform. Much confusion and bitterness would have been spared if the authorities could have realized that such assistance was not necessarily prompted by wilful or conscious disloyalty; the explanation, for the most part, could have been found in the very nature of Evangelicalism.

After this brief, general survey of the ideological background, we turn now to consider other causes and conditions in Scotland which account for the remarkable and far-reaching effects of the French Revolution upon the Scottish nation.

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[1] Cf. J. H. Overton's The Evangelical Revival in the Eighteenth Century, pp. 141, 142.

Chapter II

SCOTLAND AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

The effects of the French Revolution on the various social and political groups in Scotland have been discussed already, especially by the late Dr. W. L. Mathieson and Prof. Hume Brown, and by Dr. H. W. Meikle. Dr. Mathieson has traced ecclesiastical developments in Scotland during the revolutionary period in his Church and Reform in Scotland, 1797-1843, and Dr. Meikle's Scotland and the French Revolution shows the effects of the revolutionary events on the total life of Scotland. A survey here cannot hope to do more than summarize what these writers have done. However, some consideration of the social and political structures in Scotland at the time of the Revolution, and a brief account of the awakening of the public mind, together with the government repressions which followed, are necessary.

Throughout the eighteenth century, it was obvious to an observer of England and Scotland that, while the Union of 1707 had brought together the Parliaments of the two countries, it had not produced a common political structure; nor had it brought about an orientation towards freedom, to any noticeable extent in Scotland. Power and responsibility had been shifted from Edinburgh to Westminster, but the traditions and the parliamentary habit, which had grown in

English soil especially since 1688, had as yet affected Scotland but little, though the latter could justly point with pride to her distinguished men of letters and her centres of learning. It must have seemed to many Scottish people that little had been gained by the Union.[1]

Scottish Municipal and Parliamentary Government in 1780

It could hardly have been claimed, when the the movement for a mild reform of the Scottish burghs and counties began in 1782, that the government of Scotland was representative of the real interests even of the property-holders of the country. Trade and commerce were flourishing as never before, but other features of the national life were sadly in need of repair. The social and economic state of the masses of the people in general, and particularly in the Highlands, were not at all commensurate with the growth of trade and the attainments in culture; there was no trial by jury, and the conduct of magistrates and their subordinates was often a source of discontent. There were these and other grievances which called for redress. But the Scottish reformers wisely concentrated their main attention on the most serious of all the deformities, the self election of the magistrates and town councils in the burghs.

In their address to members of the House of Commons

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[1] See C. Wyvill's, Political Papers, vol. iii, p. 33.

in 1787, petitioning for reform, the General Committee of Delegates of Scotland complained that though the magistrates and town councils in the Royal Burghs of Scotland were the directors of the affairs of the towns and the administrators of the common property, they were totally independent of the burgesses whose affairs they administered:

> They are self-elected into office; derive no power from the citizens; are not subject to their control in matters of public police [policy]; and are not in any respect accountable to them for the application of the public money.[1]

A petition for reform was signed by forty-six out of the sixty-six Royal Burghs. The reformers insisted that what they were asking for was not a constitutional innovation or a breach in traditions. The petition called for nothing more than had already been achieved in England, and which had existed in Scotland until near the end of the sixteenth century:

> In England the qualification has been allowed to keep pace with the decreasing value of money, and has therefore been extended to greater number of electors. In Scotland, by the limitation to the rates and valuations of very remote periods, the right of voting has been confined to the possessors of very considerable estates, and the number of electors has been very much diminished.[2]

The consequences of this system were ruinous to the social, economic, and political life of Scotland. It denied to a

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[1] Ibid, p. 29.

[2] Ibid, p. 255

large proportion of the proprietors of landed property the right of being elected to office or of choosing their representatives. Among those excluded were some of the most able and trusted men of the community--"the middling and smaller gentry, and the industrious yeomen and farmers, who have inherited or acquired some landed property."[1] The country's affairs were in the hands of men, many of whom had no interest in the land whatsoever. The system was corrupted still more by the wealthy and ruling classes, who, with the help of clever lawyers, succeeded in multiplying their votes.[2] The burgh reformers came to a distressing conclusion:

> The parliamentary representation of the counties in Scotland has therefore according to the expression of a noble lord, high in the law, 'completely slid from its basis'. Much undue influence has been acquired by the Crown, the Nobility, and the great proprietors; the laws have been eluded and perverted; the number of electors has been greatly diminished; and the constitutional rights of the subjects have been invaded, usurped, or annihilated.[3]

Since Scottish Burghal representatives to Parliament were chosen by the self-electing magistrates and the town councils, the majority of the burgesses had lost all effective voice in the government, both local and national. Two million Scots were represented at Westminster by forty-five members--one less than the single English county of Cornwall.

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1 Ibid, pp. 257,8.

2 See Wyvill, op. cit., pp. 30 ff, for an account of 'nominal' and 'fictitious' votes, and the creation of 'Parchment Barons'.

3 Ibid, p. 261.

And the forty-five members were chosen by less than three thousand Scotsmen. The Royal Burgh of Edinburgh alone retained the right to seat one member in Parliament. The other towns were grouped together, four or five forming a district. Each town appointed a delegate and these delegates met and elected a member from the district. This system was, of course, unfair to the larger cities; e.g., Glasgow, with sixty thousand inhabitants and much wealth, had only a fourth of a vote--the same as each of the three towns in the same district whose combined population was not a tenth of that of Glasgow.

Such was the electoral arrangement in Scotland on the eve of the Revolution in France. To these facts the Government could only reply that while the system might be theoretically unsound, there were no serious grievances which could not be adequately dealt with within the existing framework; and, there was a limit to that "pitch of perfection to which one may reasonably expect human nature and human affairs to attain."[1] However, there was a growing unrest among the burgesses. And among the lower classes there had been engendered by the American Revolution and the Wilkes riots in England some dim awareness of the possibility of having a share in the affairs of government. But this was, as yet, slight; the awakening was still to come.

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[1] W. L. Mathieson, The Awakening of Scotland, p. 128.

Attempts at Burgh and Ecclesiastical Reform

Burgh reform. The note of reform was first struck by a wealthy and respectable Burgess of Edinburgh, Thomas MacGrugar, in 1782. In a series of letters which appeared in the Caledonian Mercury[1] under the pseudonym "Zeno", MacGrugar called upon all merchants and burgesses to look into their system of government, which professed to derive its power from constitutional principles, but which was in fact a radical departure from them. There existed at that time in Edinburgh a committee of burgesses whose hope it was to bring about some mild reform in the internal administration of the Scottish burghs.[2] Soon after the appearance of Zeno's letters, the same note was sounded in another quarter. A Burgess of Aberdeen, John Ewen, declared his sympathy with the Edinburgh burgesses. These letters, says Fletcher,[3] simply made public the grievance which many already felt. At any rate, they served as the occasion for the burgesses to assert themselves. Letters were addressed from the Edinburgh burgesses to all the other burghs, recommending that they appoint delegates who should meet at Edinburgh for the purpose of joint discussion and action

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[1] Dec. 23, 28, 1782; Jan. 6, 22, Feb. 5, 1783; see also the rejoinder by 'Atticus', Cal. Mer., April 21, 1783.

[2] Archibald Fletcher, A Memoir concerning the Origin and Progress of the Reform Proposed in the Internal Government of the Royal Burghs in Scotland. p. 13

[3] Ibid, p. 12.

in the matter of burgh reform. This move drew a warm response, and in March, 1784, the first general convention of delegates was held in Edinburgh.[1] Thirty-four, or above one-half, of all the Royal Burghs sent delegates. Others followed this lead afterwards, until fifty-four of the sixty-six burghs had committed themselves to the cause of reform.

These burgh reformers avowed that they were not seeking to introduce any radical change; they wished simply to achieve more effective government within the burghs, and to save "from dilapidation what yet remained of the common property."[2] At their general convention, the delegates set before themselves two objects: first, to correct abuses in the internal government of the burghs; and, secondly, to effect reform in the election of representatives to Parliament. However, when in the following year Pitt's attempt to obtain parliamentary reform collapsed, the Scottish burgh reformers decided to confine their efforts to the correction of municipal abuses.

A bill for reform was first introduced into the House of Commons in 1787. George Dempster, a Scottish member of the House of Commons, was approached by a committee with a view to his introducing the bill, but he declined, saying he did not think it would be proper to introduce or support a measure which would be to the

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1 Ibid, pp. 14, 15.
2 Ibid, p. 18.

detriment of his supporters.[1] The bill was brought on to the floor of the Commons by Sheridan, and was seconded by Fox. The Lord Advocate for Scotland at the time was Henry Dundas, later Lord Melville, and the virtual dictator of Scottish affairs. As had been expected, Dundas threw his influence against the bill. Adroitly, he used the strategy of evasion and delay, and further discussion and action were postponed until the following session. Actually, it was not until March, 1793, six years later, that any action was taken on the petition.

A committee of inquiry was finally voted and formed, by the authority of Parliament, to study conditions in Scotland, with reference to the alleged grievances. The committee made their report in June following, but by this time the French Revolution had struck the British Nation in full force. By June, 1793, there was no doubting Burke's original measurements of the Revolution: the 'swinish multitude' had very nearly fulfilled all his expectations. The atrocities in France (especially on and after August 10, 1792), together with Burke's eloquence and the opposite extremism of Paine and other less-influential radicals, had "rendered the sound of liberty almost odious to British ears, and the name fearful to British hearts."[2] Also, Britain had entered the war against France. Since a majority of the nation seemed to participate

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1 See H. W. Meikle's, Scotland and the French Revolution, p. 23.

2 Fletcher, op. cit., p. 125.

in these feelings of horror, "there was an end for a time to every idea of reform, and of an improvement in the institutions of the country, which could in any way be said to be founded on a principle of liberty."[1] This feeling was communicated by the London Committee (for burgh reform) to Edinburgh. Whereupon, the latter decided to abandon all proceedings for burgh reform until conditions were more auspicious.

The immediate effect of the French Revolution, therefore, on mild, burgh reform efforts was discouraging. These efforts were generated by the glaring abuses within the Scottish system, under the powerful stimuli of the American Revolution and the English reform movement of 1780. It was not designed to match the radicalism of the French reformers; and rather than be lured into such an extreme, hopeless position, it retreated, to await a more favourable occasion.

Ecclesiastical reform. Closely related to the struggle for burgh reform was the agitation over the issue of Church patronage.

The enforcement of the law of patronage (restored in 1712) had led to two secessions from the Established Church; the second was the result of the policies of the New Moderates. The Moderates aimed at regaining for the Church the interest and support of the upper and ruling

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[1] Fletcher, op. cit., pp. 125,6.

classes who had ceased actively to participate in the Church's affairs. Patronage was accepted as a means to this end. However, there was a steady opposition to patronage within the body of the Kirk, which was controlled only by the skilful leadership of Principal Robertson, leader of the Moderate Party. Like Dundas, his political counterpart, he adopted the strategy of delay and evasion; year after year, when the issue arose in the Assembly, he succeeded in maintaining patronage and in quelling anti-patronage revolt, by referring the 'grievance of patronage' to a standing commission.[1] After his retirement in 1781 the patronage issue was reopened by the 'Wild', or Popular, Party.

In 1769, Andrew Crosbie, a layman, had written a pamphlet which upheld the right of the congregation to a voice in the choice of its minister.[2] Deploring the restriction of the parliamentary franchise, the author remarked that the people owed whatever sense of liberty they still possessed to "the little stir" caused by the popular election of their own pastors: "The whole system of Presbyterian church government tends to excite ideas of liberty, and to animate men with an affection for it."[3]

In 1783, there appeared other pamphlets which carried

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[1] See Hume Brown, History of Scotland, vol. iii, pp. 362-70; also, Meikle, op. cit., p. 35.

[2] Thoughts of a Layman Concerning Patronage and Presentation,

[3] Ibid, p. 28; see also Mathieson, The Awakening of Scotland, p. 174.

forward the argument of Crosbie. Dr. Hardie's defence of the Moderate position[1] was met by An Address on Civil and Ecclesiastical Liberty, and An Inquiry into the Principles of Ecclesiastical Patronage. These pamphlets showed that the ecclesiastical conflict was bound up with the political. The restriction of civil liberty was pointed out and used as an argument in favour of congregational participation in the selection of ministers. The choosing of ministers by the congregation did more than any other thing to provide the liberty of "thinking about public affairs", instead of merely acquiescing in the judgment of a patron.[2]

But with the loss of ecclesiastical, as well as civil, liberty, through the enforcement of the law of patronage, the people were becoming insensible to their rights and their dignity:

> Such a degree of debility has seized the minds of the people, that they cannot reason about their rights, make any efforts in their defence, nor give any disturbance to the despotism. . . .They concur. . .in admiring. . .that system of government which has reduced them almost to a level with the beasts of the field.[3]

Such a system did indeed "preserve the most perfect tranquility", but at a disastrous price.

These writings, together with the parallel efforts

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1 In The Principles of Modern Moderation, passim.
2 See An Inquiry into the Principles of Ecclesiastical Patronage, p. 92.
3 Loc. cit.

of the burgh reformers, (and the American Revolution), stimulated the movement against patronage. However, by a combination of appeasement and repression, and because of a division within the Popular Party, the Government and the Moderate leaders succeeded in staving off the movement. After 1785, the agitation gradually subsided.

The efforts to undo the patronage law had apparently failed. However, they had given expression to ideas and feelings which were later to be brought out into the open fully. And there were achievements outside the boundaries of the Kirk. As Meikle points out, the language of the patronage controversy was, towards the close of the eighteenth century, becoming more clearly political: "Under the guise of ecclesiastical liberty, political ideas were gradually insinuating themselves into the minds of the common people."[1] These ideas, and the fervour which surrounded them, were shortly to merge with the larger complex of ideas, hopes, and fears, which radiated from France.

The Awakening of the Lower Classes

The beginnings of popular agitation. The two principal sources for this period, Fletcher's Memoirs, and Porritt's The Unreformed House of Commons, emphasize the lack of public interest in political affairs, on the part

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[1] Op. cit., p. 40.

of the Scottish people, during this period. Scotsmen were rather ridiculed by their English neighbours, remarks Fletcher, for their "tameness and servility, and a want of an independent spirit in political conduct."[1] And Porritt observes:

> During the greater part of the period between the Union and 1832, Scotch county elections seem to have occasioned little more popular interest or excitement than was aroused in England by the meeting of the magistrates in quarter sessions, or the coming to the county town of the judge of assize.[2]

It is not surprising that the lower classes responded with some signs of 'madness' to the prospect of radical social, political, and religious amelioration, when at last they were aroused by the powerful stimulus of the French Revolution.

French-inspired radicalism arose in England during the protracted debates (especially that between Burke and Paine) over the French Revolution. First, the Society for Constitutional Information, which had become dormant, was stirred to life. In 1791, the London Corresponding Society was formed. This latter association was closer to the ideals of Paine, and drew many of its supporters from the lower classes. Partly to curb this spread of radicalism, and also to carry forward the measures for constitutional reform, the friends of Fox (in April, 1792) formed themselves into 'The Friends of the People'. In this Whig association,

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1 Op. cit., p. 17.
2 The Unreformed House of Commons, vol. ii, p. 180.

Scotland was represented, in the distinguished persons of the Earls of Lauderdale and Buchan, Lord Daer, Colonel MacLeod, and Lord Sempill. In July, 1792, the first society of The Friends of the People in Scotland met in Edinburgh.

Previously, in the spring of 1792, resentment which had been continually repressed by the non-representative municipal authorities in Scotland, vented itself in acts of open rebellion. Dundas was burned in effigy by mobs in Dundee, Aberdeen, and in other towns. In Lanark, a mob destroyed the orchard of its hereditary provost, and threatened his life.[1] But a more significant show of incipient rebellion commenced in Edinburgh on the occasion of the King's birthday, June 4, 1792. The magistrates, having been forewarned of trouble, secured themselves with military assistance, and the day passed, disturbed only by the populace's "hissing and stoning the dragoons, and throwing dead cats at the city guard."[2] But resentment became more intense. The following night, a figure of straw was burnt in front of Dundas's house in George Square. When friends of Dundas tried to break up the demonstration, the mob broke his windows and those of his nephew, the Lord Advocate (Robert Dundas). Guards, called out from the Castle, fired upon the enraged demonstrators, and several persons were wounded, one mortally.

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[1] Mathieson, op. cit., p. 121 [2] Loc. cit.

Such popular excitement could neither be absorbed nor contained by the burgh reformers. Hence, it was "diverted into more dangerous channels."[1] Branches of the new Edinburgh Whig Society were formed in other parts of Scotland, causing alarm in government circles--increasingly so, since it was obvious that some of these offsprings bore striking dissimilarities to their parent, Whig association in England. Whereas the latter had restricted itself to members of Parliament and other select members of the upper classes, the Scottish branch associations, like the London Corresponding Society, opened its doors to the labouring classes--to "weavers and shoemakers in the country districts, tradesmen and shopkeepers in the towns."[2] Also, radical literature was being circulated. From Dundee there was forwarded to Secretary Dundas one such paper, containing the Declaration of the Rights of Man, together with a condemnation of Dundas's opposition to burgh reform, and an appeal for "equal representation, just taxation, and liberty of conscience."[3] Some of these reports were probably exaggerated, but it is clear that the year 1792 witnessed a significant stirring among the working classes in Scotland.

The gathering storm. The situation now seemed to Dundas to be approaching a critical stage. Writing to London

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1 Ibid, p. 122.
2 Meikle, op. cit., p.93.
3 Ibid, p. 91.

in October, 1792, he professed to be anxious not so much because of any direct impact of the successes of the French on Scottish men of influence, but because the newly-formed reform societies were allowing the lower classes to enter. This could lead, and in fact was already leading, to an arousing of all the 'swinish instincts' of which Burke had written, and which the French were displaying with such infamous skill. For confirmation, Dundas cited an anonymous letter which he had received. It read:

> Within these few months I have visited several places in Scotland and corresponded with others, and find from every intelligence that all the lower ranks, particularly the operative manufacturers, with a considerable number of their employers, are poisoned with an enthusiastic rage for ideal liberty that will not be crushed without coercive measures.[1]

This is a biased account, but it gives some indication of the rising unrest among the masses, together with the uneasy attitude of the upper and ruling classes.

The Revolution in France, in its first phase, activated in Scotland a lively and sometimes rather virulent debate, especially in the press. Meikle notes[2] that whereas in 1782 there were only eight Scottish newspapers, by 1790 the number had increased to twenty-seven, and there were other additions during 1791 and 1792. However, from 1790 to about the middle of the year 1792 (when the branch

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[1] Quoted by Meikle, op. cit., p. 94.
[2] Ibid, pp. 86 ff.

societies of The Friends of the People were formed), discussion was, by and large, localized in Edinburgh, and it was carried on by the upper classes. The Whig societies--The Friends of the People--, and the new developments in France, led to popular unrest; and this was, in turn, aggravated by government repressions. After about September, 1792, the events in France exerted a direct and profound influence on the total life of Scotland. "Everything rung", reflects Lord Cockburn, "and was connected with the Revolution in France. . .Everything, not this or that thing, but literally everything was soaked in this one event."[1]

A General Convention of The Friends of the People, which was planned for December 11 (1792), did not in itself greatly disturb the authorities. But so widespread were the effects of the French Revolution at this time that it was assumed that some of the members had designs in mind more radical than those of parliamentary reform. Dr. Somerville, the well-known minister of Jedburgh, dedicated a great proportion of his time trying to combat radical ideas which threatened his parishioners, but he met with little success: "The misrepresentations, falsehoods, and libellous attacks on the Constitution and Government. . .rendered all my exertions unprofitable and fruitless, and lessened my authority and usefulness."[2]

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1 Memorials of His Times, p. 81
2 T. Somerville, My Own Life and Times, pp. 266,7.

Lord Cockburn says that, except for the years 1793-4, when there were localized attempts to ape the French, there was no serious, conscious inclination to imitate the democrats in France. It was rather the harsh obstinacy of the ruling oligarchies, headed by Dundas, which drove the people to desperate action.[1] This is a significant testimony, since it comes from such a trustworthy witness, and a nephew of the Lord Melville. However, developments among the lower classes in Scotland must have seemed to Dundas disconcertingly similar to the trend of affairs in France. The revolutionary slogans, which struck such terror in the minds of those concerned with social order and security, were not uncommonly used by Scottish workers who felt themselves deeply wronged, and by others who were prompted by a need for excitement. There was a deep, semi-conscious stirring in Scotland,which more nearly resembled that of France than was to be found, generally, in England. The situation called for either basic concessions (not only to the burgh reformers, but now also to the lower orders) or new forms of repression. Dundas saw this more clearly than did Fox and some of his Whig friends. As Sir Henry Craig has put it: "The wiser heads in Scotland knew the charms which fanaticism had for the Scottish populace, and judged that such fanaticism might find sustenance in politics now, as it had in religion in the past."[2]

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1 Op. cit., pp. 81 ff.
2 A Century of Scottish History, vol. ii, p. 142.

The Scottish reign of terror. The dialectical struggle between the authorities and the 'people' moved rapidly towards a climax in the closing days of 1792 and the early part of 1793. Town councils, merchant and trade guilds, and the great majority of the holders of property, unequivocally declared their "support of the Constitution"; the reformers were increasingly looked upon as threats to society.[1] In January, 1793, organized repression began with a vengeance. Its first victim was the young advocate and zealous reformer, Thomas Muir. Muir was arrested, later tried, and sentenced to fourteen years transportation to Botany Bay. Shortly after Muir's trial, Palmer, a Unitarian minister in Dundee, was sentenced to be transported for seven years. Both trials were scandalous exhibitions of 'justice' in the Scottish courts, but they also revealed the temper of the period. "There were so few calm jurymen to be got", says Lord Cockburn, "that the verdicts most probably would have been the same, though they had been chosen by ballot."[2]

The immediate effect of such treatment on the political dissenters was to inflame their passion for radical reform and for revenge. The crushing defeat of Grey's petition in the Commons was a last-minute signal for "some more effectual" (constitutional) means to obtain reform, before

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1 See Mathieson, op. cit., p. 129.
2 Examination of the Trials for Sedition in Scotland, vol i, p. 82.

the previously arranged meeting of the third General Convention on October 29, 1793. There was a meeting of minds between the Scottish delegates and the London Corresponding Society. The latter suggested union and the sending of English delegates to Edinburgh for the Convention, and this was heartily agreed to by Skirving, the Convention's Secretary. These delegates, along with a delegation from the United Irishmen, were late in arriving; the Convention had completed its business and had adjourned. However, it was re-convened, and the Scottish delegates who remained were asked to return. The delegates then proceeded to form themselves into "The British Convention of Delegates of the People, Associated to Obtain Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments." As we shall see later, the impracticable idealism of some of these delegates led to the crushing defeat of the reform movement. Gradually, it simmered down almost to a standstill, until the weavers strike in Glasgow in 1812 renewed the struggle.

Time was to show that in this unsuccessful surge towards freedom, the feudal spell over the Scots had been broken. Known before for the literary achievements of a privileged few, the Scottish nation--manufacturers, craftsmen, farmers--had felt the challenge of freedom. And the working classes had acquired something of a political voice, which with time was to make itself heard and respected.

Chapter III

THOMAS CHALMERS: REVOLT AND REACTION

If Principal Robertson dominated the life of the Church of Scotland during a large part of the second half of the eighteenth century, Thomas Chalmers was its shining light in the early part of the nineteenth. The former lived to see the 'dawn of liberty' in France, and he welcomed it; though there is little doubt that his attitude would have changed if he had lived longer. Chalmers, a mere boy in the little town of Anstruther when the Revolution began, had not yet become aware of the importance of politics and economics, and his active ministry was still ahead of him when the Revolution (in the narrow sense) had run its course. But the years between 1790 and 1800 were impressionable years for young Chalmers. This phase of his life is not so well known as his later life and works, but for this study it is the most important.

The first two divisions of this chapter will deal mainly with his early life and academic preparation for the ministry (though the second division goes beyond, into his active ministry); while divisions three and four deal with his social, political, and religious thought, and with the events and ideas leading to the withdrawal from the Established Church.

Anstruther, St. Andrews, and William Godwin

Early life in Anstruther. Thomas Chalmers was nine years of age when the French Revolution began. Two years later he entered upon his college course at St. Andrews, where he remained for the next seven years. During most of this time, St. Andrews, together with most of the other leading university centres in England and Scotland, was feeling the impact of the Revolution and the reaction against it. With Henry Dundas as its Chancellor, St. Andrews was an arsenal for Tory propaganda.

But before entering St. Andrews, young Thomas had been conditioned by influences which were hostile to the ideas and forces associated with the Revolution. His parents were pious and quiet. His father was a firm Evangelical Calvinist, and a Tory who sought never to incur the displeasure of those in authority in political matters.[1] This political conformism was in keeping with his piety. At the age of two, young Chalmers was committed to a nurse, "whose cruelty and deceitfulness haunted his memory through life"[2] (italics not in original). To escape this domestic tyranny Thomas went to school a year later. Here, while he seems to have done well with his young schoolmates, he was not helped (or at least not understood), by his aged teacher whose

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[1] He was Provost of Anstruther.
[2] Hanna, Memoirs of Dr. Chalmers, vol. i, p. 4.

"thirst for flogging" had grown with age.[1] Dodds comments that he grew up at Anstruther "caring for nothing but play and boyish revelry and companionship." When he read, it was stories of the adventures of travellers and explorers. Early in life he determined to be a minister, not because this was a pious calling but because the minister was regarded as being a superior person intellectually.[2]

This early picture of life at Anstruther reveals a sharp conflict between the native disposition of young Thomas, and his social situation. First, he was subjected to an authoritarian rule by his pious, politically conservative parents: to conform to the accepted social and religious patterns was a necesaary credential. But more serious was the despotic authority of his nurse and his old schoolmaster. These influences were together setting up a revolt. Thomas Chalmers, unlike his father, was temperamentally not disposed to acquiesce or withdraw when he was irrationally overpowered or offended. He never forgave the nurse who treated him "inhumanly." He spoke of her "in his latest years and with a feeling of indignation as fresh as if he were describing an event of yesterday."[3] But it was not until he left Anstruther that he was able to define and give full expression to his feelings of resentment.

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1 Ibid, p. 5.
2 James Dodds, Thomas Chalmers, p. 3.
3 Hanna, op. cit., p. 4.

Intellectual awakening. During his first two sessions at St. Andrews, Chalmers was largely occupied with athletics. In the following session (1793-4), his spasmodic intellectual curiosity gave place to a strong, spontaneous desire for knowledge--especially mathematical knowledge. This intellectual awakening was associated with the name of Dr. James Brown. Other senior associates were Mr. John (later Sir John) Leslie, and Mr. James Milne, both of whom were considered then as "marked men . . . ultra Whigs, keen Reformers, and what would now be called Radicals."[1] It is significant that Chalmers became associated with this small group of radically-minded men at this crucial period. As we have remarked already (in Chapter II), the years 1793 and 1794 witnessed the political awakening of large sections of the middle and lower classes in Scotland, under the impact of the revolutionary events in France. The "ultra Whigs," mentioned above, together with Dr. Brown, were keenly interested in these developments. We know something about their romantic interests and their feelings about current political affairs, through a series of letters which Leslie wrote to James Brown at St. Andrews.[2]

Several distinguishing traits of temperament and intellectual leanings disclose themselves in this correspondence.

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1 Quoted by Hanna, op. cit., p. 10, from a MS letter written by a Rev. Mr. Miller, in 1847.

2 See Appendix A.

The most outstanding, perhaps, is a romantic restlessness and instability. Leslie is especially dissatisfied. From Virginia (where he had gone on a romantic voyage), he writes to Brown in January, 1789, that he intends to "roam for some time" till he finally settles down. However, the novelty of the new world soon vanished, and he longed to return to St. Andrews, and perhaps to join Brown (then a divinity student in St. Mary's) in reviving there the study of Nature. This hope did not materialize, and Leslie remained for some time afterwards in "the sea of adventure." In London, he was impatient of hearing "great names, titles", and he regarded the pomp, formality, and splendour of London society as worse than nothing.[1] If Brown's peregrinations were less ambitious than those of Leslie, his romantic sentiments seem to have been equally as strong, and rather unconventional. As late as 1797, Leslie is sure that he (Dr. Brown) is not attracted by the "group of black coats" (in the General Assembly).[2]

As for politics in the years 1793 and 1794, Leslie is clearly in sympathy with the radical reformers, in France and in Britain. He knows not whether to look with pity or indignation on the "expiring efforts of privileged oligarchy."

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1 Appendix A.

2 See his letter to Brown, 7 May, 1797, in the Portfolio of Holograph (MS) Letters, Relating to Edinburgh and the University Life of the Time, 1790-1830, in Edinburgh University Library.

> Persecution and folly at home, disgrace and discomfiture abroad! What a miserable picture. Ça va, ça ira . . . A few months will establish the republic (in France), notwithstanding the pious and charitable denunciations of the presbyteries.[1]

In April, 1794, he writes regarding the possibility of his obtaining a position in the University of St. Andrews. He fears lest he should "catch the drowsy torpor which generally prevails there" and in other, similar "monkish institutions" (universities). However, if he should secure a position, he would be happy to unite his efforts to those of Dr. Brown "to arouse a spirit of discussion and kindle an ardour for science." In June, 1795, he is still full of hope for the Revolution. He is convinced that the downfall of the Jacobins is imminent, and that order will be restored in France. Unfortunately, Dr. Brown's replies to these letters have not survived. To what extent he shared the radical sentiments expressed in the above citations, it is not possible to say. The implication seems to be that he was not so fully committed as was Leslie, but that his sentiments were of a similar nature.

This was a vital part of the background to the informal discussions in which Thomas Chalmers and other young students in St. Andrews participated during the critical, revolutionary days of 1793 and 1794. From time to time, a small group met with Brown, Leslie, and Milne, and together they

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[1] Appendix A

[2] Appendix A

discussed various subjects--especially ethics and politics. William Godwin's Political Justice appeared in 1793; this philosophical apologetic for revolutions[1] seemed to young rebels in England and in Scotland the new gospel, heralding Utopia. It became a favourite topic of conversation in Dr. Brown's circle, and it was studied eagerly by Chalmers:

> Dr. Chalmers, at the close of his philosophical studies, became deeply engaged with the study of Godwin's Political Justice, a work for which he entertained at that time a profound, and as he afterwards felt and acknowledged, a misplaced admiration.[2]

From Chalmers's letters to his parents at this time, we learn that the young mathematics enthusiast and admirer of Godwin was "excited and absorbed" in his work.[3] How, one might ask, could anyone be excited by the cold rationalism of Godwin, or by mathematics? The answer seems to be that mathematics had opened a field in which there was certitude and challenge, and Godwin (together with the stimulating personalities of Brown and Leslie) had freed him from the tiresome authority of his Tory-Calvinistic background. The time was ripe for a gospel which demanded heroism and which promised adventure. The name of Thomas Muir was ringing in the mind of every reformer in Scotland, by the end of 1793, and the undaunted heroism of Gerald, in the face of the

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[1] Godwin disavowed violence, but the immediate effect of his Political Justice was to sanction the French Revolution.
[2] Hanna, op. cit., p. 14.
[3] Loc. cit.

Scottish judges, had further intensified feelings. On the other hand, Tory propaganda and repression were operating with a vengeance, and the indiscretion of some of the radicals had played into the hands of the anxious authorities. Hysteria was widespread.

How did young Chalmers (he was then thirteen years old) respond to these concrete events? It is impossible to say with certainty. Hanna, and most of Chalmers's biographers, say little or nothing about this momentous social and political upheaval in its relation to Chalmers's intellectual and emotional awakening. Chalmers himself seems to have been oblivious to the activities of The Friends of the People, and the trials of the political martyrs. But it is most unlikely that this was the case. He was still too young to have ventured far into so fierce a conflict, and the climate of opinion at St. Andrews at that time must have been discouraging, if he had wished openly to sympathize with the reformers. But Leslie's letters indicate that, at least, the events and trends of the time were among the topics of conversation in the little radical group at St. Andrews, and the youthful members of the group were inbued with a generous and humanitarian optimism. In this third session, Chalmers became a member of the political society in the University.[1]

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[1] The records of the society were not preserved.

The general atmosphere which Chalmers found in the University made a recoil from his rigidly authoritarian upbringing not at all unnatural. Moderatism had overrun the place and left students and faculty with a "positive contempt for all that is properly and peculiarly gospel."[1] Furthermore, his close intellectual associates held in contempt the Toryism and rigid Calvinism of his youth. In contrast to the arid orthodoxy which he had known earlier, the lectures of Dr. Brown, the discussions with him and with other serious-minded students, and the study of Political Justice, must have had for young Chalmers all the charm and force of a religious revelation. The ideas were not merely new (though this was, undoubtedly, part of the attraction); they were sensible, lively, and they were challenging. The men who held these ideas were in earnest and genuinely concerned for human needs. Also, they were optimistic about the future. It is not surprising, therefore, that the youthful spirit of Chalmers

> . . . .should have kindled into generous emotion at the glowing prospects which they cherished as to the future progress of our species springing out of political emancipation; and that he should have admitted the idea that the religion of his early home was a religion of confinement and intolerance.[2]

There was a similar restless idealism, a quest for new

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[1] See Chalmers's Preface to Coutts's Sermon.
[2] Hanna, op. cit., p. 15.

knowledge, and a dissatisfaction with old, established ways, in other parts of England and Scotland at this time. Reference has already been made[1] to Jeffrey's 'romantic temper' which he thought would never leave him. The abortive attempt of Coleridge, Southey, and others, to build a Utopia on the banks of the Susquehanna, or in Europe, is well known. Though Chalmers was younger than most of these young romantics, the impact of revolutionary events and the romantic temper of the time made an impression on his ardent personality.

But did he ever consciously assimilate revolutionary principles? Hanna remarks that he soon retreated from "the political deviation into which he was thus temporarily seduced."[2] So far as we know, none of his associates survived the reaction against Godwin and the French Revolution, after 1797. And Chalmers was no exception. Like most of his young contemporaries who had been aroused by the Revolution, he gradually abandoned his early hopes, though he remained for some time afterwards opposed to the Government's war policy.[3]

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[1] Ante, p. 5.

[2] Op. cit., p. 15. Some of Hanna's comments obviously derive, in part, from his Tory bias, though on the whole his account is reliable.

[3] His ardent humanitarianism is evidenced in his chapel prayers at St. Mary's (academic session 1795-6). The sentiments expressed in these prayers are in striking contrast to his later polemics against Napoleon. Hanna quotes (op. cit., p. 20) a student who heard the prayers: "The wonderful flow of. . .ardent descriptions of the attributes and works of God, and still more perhaps the astonishingly harrowing delineation of the miseries, the horrid cruelties, immoralities, and abominations inseparable from war, which always came in more or less in connection with the bloody warfare. . .with France."

Later, when Napoleon's successes and ambitions directly threatened the British Isles, Chalmers ceased to criticise; and, instead, threw his full weight behind the war effort. In his writings and discourses he rarely mentions the Revolution; and when he does (as in his opening lecture on chemistry), he leaves no doubt as to his position--it is that of Burke and the later Wordsworth. His later deprecation of "rash and reckless innovations"[1] is never qualified by any discernible sympathy for any of the repressed attempts at parliamentary reform. One suspects, therefore, that his 'political deviation' had much in common with the short-lived evangelical 'conversions, and that it hardly got beyond the abstract. In extreme youth, he was caught up into a wave of radicalism just as it was striking and shattering itself against the breakers of reactionary repression. Idealism and strong feelings were generated, but the social outlets for such feelings had been blocked by fear and hostility, caused by the terror of the French Revolution. Chalmers's optimism underwent a profound transformation.

Effects of the Godwinian sojourn. But the Chalmers who emerged from this deviation was different from the earlier Chalmers. As has already been indicated, a wedge was driven between him and the authority of Anstruther, making it possible for him to express himself more fully and to give vent

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1 See Hanna, op. cit., p. 60.

to his previously restrained feelings of resentment. Not only did he come to regard his early parental nurture as severe, narrow, and outmoded; he became strongly conscious of his individuality and his dignity. During his tutorship, after the completion of his divinity course, he was warned that he had far too much pride; to which he retorted;

> There are two kinds of pride, sir; There is that pride which lords it over inferiors; and there is that pride which rejoices in repressing the insolence of superiors. The first I have none of--the second I glory in.[1]

And writing to his father about the treatment he was receiving as a tutor, he complained that guests in the home were disregarding him. "But", he continued, "I don't give a farthing. I can turn up my nose with the best of them and despise their silly pride."[2] And in defence of his father, who he feels has been wronged by 'superiors', he writes to a friend:

> Ah! my dear sir, if you felt. . .the contempt which attends the simplicity of virtue, the base ingratitude of those who have availed themselves of the influence and exertions of unsuspicious friends! I swear at this moment I feel a sentiment of superiority which I would not forego for all the luxurious pleasures, all the flattering distinctions of wealth. I heave with a secret aspiration of contempt for the unprincipled deceit, the mean hypocrisy of our dignified superiors.[3]

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1 Ibid, p. 32.
2 Ibid, p. 28; this citation has been deleted by Hanna.
3 Ibid, p. 52.

It is clear that Chalmers is freeing himself of cumulative resentment. The freer, un-Calvinistic atmosphere at St. Andrews, and the radical influences there, have made of a potential rebel an actual one; the ardent impulses and the strong determination which were manifested in early childhood have now taken a new turn. But the rebellion is not a mature, studied deliberation; rather, it is compulsive, and suggests injured pride rather more than a disinterested concern for social justice. This compulsion played a large part in the French Revolution and in the radical agitation in Scotland. It is quite obvious, for instance, that Leslie's contempt for the privileged beneficiaries of the established order in the 'monkish institutions' had some connection with his unsuccessful attempt to anchor himself, psychologically and professionally.[1] His comments on the Revolution and on republicanism must be read with this in mind. Almost the same could be said of Chalmers.

But though Chalmers's rebellion against members of the aristocracy appears to have been prompted largely by the disparity between his own self-esteem and the casual recognition of his merits by his 'superiors', it was more than that. In the letter to his friend, a part of which is cited above, Chalmers concludes by calling on superiors "to abolish that putrid system of interest which threatens

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[1] See Appendix A.

to extinguish all the ardours of generous and patriotic sentiment, [and] to adopt a more just and liberal conduct to inferiors."[1] Mrs. Oliphant suggests that all this fiery declamation means

> . . .only that the reigning lord of Balcaskie had given a vacant living or other appointment away to some other supporter who probably had an equal right to the gift. . .All the vehemence of disappointed youth is in the outburst.[2]

Except for the word "only", this verdict is undoubtedly sound.

It is not correct to say that all of Chalmers's vehement protests against the oppression and exploitation of the weak and simple by the possessors of power and rank were nothing more than self-pity, disguised in grandiose diction. He never rose to the more dispassionate concern for justice and freedom which actuated some of the contemporary political reformers. But he had been stirred by the gospel of freedom, justice, and opportunity for all men--including himself; his was one of the many minds among Scottish students which were aroused by the "excitement and discussion of principles," brought on by the French Revolution. There is an apparent insincerity in Chalmers's attitude which is really unresolved tension between self-pity and real humanitarian concern; between the ideal of

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1 Hanna, op. cit., p. 52.
2 Mrs. Oliphant, Thomas Chalmers, p. 20.

Anstruther, and the daring, reckless ideal of which the French Revolution was the most dramatic expression. This tension was not confined to his early years. Mathieson finds Chalmers guilty of "aspiring to a crown of martyrdom"[1] during the later patronage controversy. But, again, the judgment is too simple. Any appraisal of Chalmers's life and work is likely to be unbalanced if it fails to recognize a basic ambivalence which was the result (at least in part) of a revolutionary enthusiasm for freedom being grafted on to a rigid Calvinistic and Tory character structure. Hazlitt[2] has described the conscious and unconscious conflicts of other sensitive minds during this period.

Chalmers, then, up to this point, reflects much of the storm and stress of the latter days of the eighteenth century. But his life before 1800 is not at all clearly drawn out. Friendly eyewitnesses help us, but they tell us too little of what we should like most to know. We should have desired further light on the sojourn into Godwinism--more than the one paragraph which Hanna gives; what were the duration and the depth of the glowing optimism which he shared with others as to the future of the human race? Only Chalmers himself could have told us these intimate details; and he seems to have tried to close this chapter of his life rather prematurely. However, his religious experiences and

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1 See his Church and Reform in Scotland, 1797-1843, p.296.
2 In The Spirit of the Age, pp. 106 ff.

his writings do give us, obliquely, some further light on the effects of these revolutionary influences.

His Struggle with Doubt and the Great Spiritual Crisis

Secularism or theology? When Chalmers entered St. Mary's Divinity College in the autumn of 1795, it was definitely not as a student eager to advance from his secular interests to biblical and dogmatic studies. The prevalence of Moderatism (which, for the most part, was uncritically allied to the political status quo) offered no inducement to a young mind which had been awakened by the glowing prospects of secularism; and orthodox Calvinism was an even greater stumbling block. Despite the entry of Britain into the war against France, and the consequent public reaction against all forms and shades of radicalism, the spirit of radicalism (as symbolized by Godwin) had not yet been crushed. The Napoleonic spectre, which sent the star of Godwin on its way to obscurity, had only begun to emerge, and there were still many people in England and in Scotland who deplored the war against France. Chalmers was among this number.

Chalmers had no use for the divinity lectures of Principal Hill. He let himself day-dream through them, because he questioned the sincerity of the lecturer.[1] He continued to nurture his interest in mathematics, and was

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1 See Hanna, op. cit., p. 16.

only mildly exposed to theology during his first session at St. Mary's. However, the unconscious mental habits acquired at Anstruther, and encouraged by his father's letters, were carrying him along the religious course, despite the ascendency of Moderatism and the lingering influence of anti-clerical, political liberalism (or radicalism). Dr. Brown, his favourite pastor-lecturer, still exerted a cogent influence upon him.

An inevitable conflict disclosed itself soon after he began his divinity studies. He was confronted by the atheistic presuppositions of Godwin's writings. Up to this time, this part of Godwin's system had been rather obscurred, along with the implications of his extreme rationalism, by the humanitarian enthusiasm which Political Justice had helped to arouse. Chalmers's religious faith, up to this time, had consisted of a kind of romantic awareness of the "sublime ideas of the Divine Omnipresence, Omnipotence, Omniscience, and Goodness, and . . .some lively conceptions of the character, the teaching, and the example of the Author of Christianity."[1] But now he begins to doubt.

Towards the close of his first session in divinity, the writings of Jonathan Edwards seemed to answer the questions which Godwin's doctrines had raised. The ardour with which he studied Edwards's writings on Predestination, and

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[1] Ibid, p. 16.

his strenuous preoccupation with the 'natural' evidences for, and operations of, the Creator, show that his earlier zeal has not abated; rather it has taken a new turn. But to this union of Calvinism and 'natural' religion has been joined the fervour of the dawning romantic age, presaged in England and Scotland by the Evangelical Awakening. These forces were all at work in the spiritual development of Chalmers, and were to crystallize into a strong Evangelicalism, and an almost equally zealous Toryism. The prodigal son was yet to become the joy of his father's heart.

There follows a period of twelve months "in a sort of mental elysium", in which state his consciousness is enraptured by the "magnificence of the Godhead and the universal subordination of all things to the one great purpose for which he evolved and was supporting creation."[1] Could Edwardian Predestination have been a safety net into which Chalmers dropped in his descent from the certainties of early religious faith? In any case, "whatever doubts Godwin had injected, Jonathan Edwards dispelled."[2] But the devils of doubt were not dispelled for good; the safety net was soon to give way, leaving Chalmers very depressed and with "no steady object. . .to rest upon."[3]

Providence or Progress? Two further crises lay before

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1 Ibid, p. 17. 2 Ibid, p. 45.
3 Ibid, p. 46.

Chalmers. He was to pass through a period of much more acute doubt, and this was to be followed by the great spiritual change which became the watershed of his entire life. But in proceeding to these religious crises, it is well to have in mind something of the intellectual and spiritual context, or the cultural background.

Prof. Lovejoy has described the eighteenth century as the period in the history of western thought when the idea of "The Great Chain of Being" came to its fruition. According to this conception, the whole of creation has been so arranged by an infinite and wise Creator that every created being, each species--from angels down to the very lowest creature--has its appointed place and rôle in the cosmic scheme. While there are inequalities in dignity, each link in the great cosmic chain is of equal importance to the whole of the forms, and to the all-wise Sovereign whose nature it is to create continuously, that the universe may be filled. Central in this concept, also, is the principle of gradation. Happiness consists in remaining in one's own sphere; to seek to go beyond this is to commit the sin of pride and to become involved, uselessly, in anxious misery:

> The method of such an ethics would consist in taking stock of man's actual constitution--his distinguishing instincts, desires, and natural capacities--and in formulating his good in terms of some balanced and practicable fulfilment of these. And since man's place is not a very high one, since he is a mixture of the animal and the intellectual elements, and since the latter is present in him only in a meagre measure and

> in its lowest, or almost lowest, form, the beginning of wisdom for him was to remember and to hold fast to his limitations.[1]

The ethical and political consequences of this idea in the eighteenth century (especially the first half) was "a counsel of imperfection--an ethics of prudent mediocrity."[2] It came to mean that the virtuous man in society, as well as Man in the cosmic system, learned to know what and where his place was, and not to seek to transcend it. Thus emerged the doctrine, "whatever is, is right." But the principle of plenitude was, in its conclusion, at war with itself. Man was to remain in his appointed place; he was not to expect any sort of perfection, but rather to content himself with things as they were in his own realm. The non sequitur was just here: Man is endowed with the capacity of, and is constantly bent towards, transcending both his situation and himself. Constitutionally, he is a creature who is perpetually dissatisfied with his attainments; he is incessantly hankering after infinity. If this propensity is inherent in human nature, then surely men are justified in conceiving and striving towards indeterminate possibilities of improvement, individually and socially. This conclusion could not for long be suppressed.

The chief corner-stone in the 'optimism-of-acceptance'

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1 A. E. Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being, p. 201.
2 Ibid, p. 200.

edifice was the doctrine of Providence. Despite the innovations of seventeenth century science, and the rationalism of the early eighteenth century, the traditional conception of Divine Providence had remained dominant. However, it became increasingly difficult to demonstrate that the idea of progress which had begun to emerge with the rise of modern science was not something new, and that it was not in conflict with religious orthodoxy. By the middle of the eighteenth century there were the beginnings of a conscious revolt against the traditional doctrine of Providence, largely because it was bound up with social, economic, and political injustice and oppression. The first direct, concerted attempt to sunder the rule of God and the work of man was made by the French Encyclopaedists. As in ancient Greece, Protagoras and Socrates had turned away from speculation about supramundane affairs to deal with the nature and ethical responsibilities of man, so these modern thinkers sought to free the mind of 'ultimates' in order to reaffirm human dignity, along the lines of the new cosmology and the sensationalism of Locke. Man was the measure of all things, and the amelioration of social ills was the goal towards which all knowledge was to be directed. Led by Diderot, Baron d'Holbach, and Helvétius, the Encyclopaedists proposed practical measures: The whole system of sacerdotalism should be done away with, and in its place should be set up a reign of reason, made possible by the spread of knowledge. Governments

should change laws which were geared to medieval priest-craft and aristocratic oppression, and formulate new laws whose object was to meet the real needs of the people. That this beneficent change had not already taken place was due, they affirmed, solely to the corruption of institutions and the reign of ignorance. It had nothing to do with any inherent depravity of man's nature.

If the optimism of the age of Pope was one of acceptance, that of Diderot, Holbach, Rousseau, and the Jacobin philosophy generally (later shared by Godwin), was one of revolutionary change. It rested on the assumption of human perfectibility. Man was left free and solely responsible to work out his own salvation: the laws of Nature[1] were his only ally, but these were sufficient. In France, such a gospel was the inevitable consequence of the development of thought, and the unrelieved oppression and gross inefficiency of a feudalistic order. The philosophy of sensationalism (expanded by French thinkers) had generated a fervent optimism, which was joined to an equally intense resentment against history and traditional institutions.[2] It was this contempt for history which horrified Burke at the outset of the Revolution.

Chalmers (as we shall see) soon adopted views similar

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1 'Nature was transformed into a revolutionary catchword. Actually it took on some of the attributes of the Hebrew-Christian God.

2 See J. B. Bury's The Idea of Progress, Chap. VIII.

to those of Burke. However, Chalmers's conservatism was held along with "an esteem for liberty and a contempt for tyranny and tyrants," which Hutcheson and some of his disciples who succeeded him had instilled into the life of the Scottish universities. The liberalism of Hutcheson, Adam Smith, and John Millar, in Glasgow, and David Hume and Dugald Stewart in Edinburgh, is not to be confused with the revolutionary doctrines of the Encyclopaedists. This Scottish tradition of academic liberalism (symbolized chiefly by the Church Moderates) suffered most from the awakening of the masses in Scotland. But despite the loyal Toryism of the Moderates, there was no denying that Scottish liberalism

> . . .had much in common with the great liberal movement which preceded the French Revolution. . . . the culture which gave no general support to democracy contained elements not unfavourable to its claim.[1]

Hutcheson taught that "the public happiness is the sole end of all civil power," and he believed that when the people were justly dissatisfied with their government, or with their rulers, "they do a necessary duty to themselves and posterity by making all the violent efforts which are necessary to accomplish a change."[2] The suspicion which the anti-revolutionary reaction cast over the once-popular principles of Adam Smith, soon after Smith's death in 1790,

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1 Mathieson, op. cit., pp. 12, 13.
2 Quoted in Mathieson, op. cit., p. 15

and the rapid decline of the Moderate Party after the triumph of reaction are further evidences that the impact which the Scottish intellectual liberals made on the temper of the time had affinities with the developments which in France had produced a revolution. Chalmers was conditioned by this tradition of freedom, as well as by the conservatism of Burke.

Freedom or security? This general conflict of ideas and forces would seem to be related to the personal conflicts which we were considering earlier. The academic liberalism which prevailed at St. Andrews, and abstract political radicalism (together with the study of mathematics), roused Chalmers intellectually, and opened romantic vistas to his imagination. This issued in a lively assertiveness and a general dislike for the privileged beneficiaries of the status quo, in politics and in the Church. But revolutionary change later became a threat to both social and personal (psychological) security. The gains of 'freedom' for society seemed much less promising in 1796 that they had appeared earlier. And while, consciously, Chalmers could anticipate with enthusiasm the overthrow of Toryism and Calvinism, unconsciously, these conservative structures were very much a part of his own personality structure and outlook. If this analysis is correct, Chalmers's doubts and uncertainty would seem to have been occasioned by two

conflicting life-orientations; the price of 'freedom' was felt to be security. That the conflict did not become acute before Chalmers entered St. Mary's College was probably due to the steadying spiritual support of Dr. Brown, and also, perhaps, to Godwin's residual Calvinism.

It was otherwise with Holbach, whose Système de la Nature Chalmers read just before or just after the completion of his divinity studies. Here the real conflict came out into the open. It was to Holbach "much more than to Godwin's Political Justice [that] he attributed his tendency to doubt as to the stability of the foundation on which all truth--moral and religious--rested."[1] The citation which follows in Hanna's Memoirs--an excerpt from a letter written by a close friend of Chalmers--furnishes one of many examples of the intensity of the psychological and religious revolution which was an outgrowth of the violent revolt in the late eighteenth century against political and religious structures of authority:

> After being very uncomfortable for some time in that situation, he left the family abruptly, and came to me at St. Andrews, in a state of great excitement and unhappiness, and lived with me during the rest of the session. His mind was at that time in a most interesting but unhappy condition. He was earnestly searching for the truth--saw some things very clearly and satisfactorily, but could not find his way to the understanding and belief of some of the most obvious doctrines of natural and revealed religion. Those who were not particularly acquainted with him, thought him

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[1] Hanna, op. cit., p. 46.

> going fast into a state of derangement. One common expression in his public prayers, and which showed the state of his mind at that time--'Oh, give us some steady object for our mind to rest upon', was uttered with all his characteristic earnestness and emphasis. I knew that he was exceedingly earnest in seeking the light of truth at that time in his private devotion, and was often on his knees at my bedside after I had gone to bed.[1]

This was in the latter part of 1798 or the early part of 1799. The great crisis which changed the course of Chalmers's thought and ministry came some ten years later. During this intervening period he was rather successfully preoccupied with his lectures at St. Andrews[2]. He was installed as minister in Kilmany, but he devoted only weekends to his work in the parish. During the week he was in St. Andrews, and there "he threw himself into the duties of the mathematical classes with all the fervour of an overflowing enthusiasm."[3] It is possible that this fervent activity was a compulsive escape from the inner conflict described above, but he was engrossed in his work and eager to assume larger academic responsibilities.

In December, 1806, his brother George died. This death was followed by the death of his sister, in August, 1808. He himself was taken seriously ill, and for a time it was feared that he would not recover. While his mind was occupied with the thought of death, he read the life

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1 Loc. cit.
2 He became an assistant lecturer in Mathematics in 1802.
3 Hanna, op. cit., p. 58.

and writings of Pascal, and these writings accentuated his awareness of the transitoriness and the emptiness of all the glitter and the glory of this-worldly attainments. Now in the face of death and eternity all these gains seemed to be nothing. In his zeal for mathematics he had forgotten the really important dimensions--the smallness of time and the greatness of eternity. Though his body was weak, his mind was active,

> . . .and into it, now left to its own profound musings, there sunk the deepest and most overpowering impression of human mortality. . .a panic seized the family [at Anstruther]--partaking fully of that panic, Mr. Chalmers believed that he was about to die.[1]

In this state of mind, "his past life looked. . .like a feverish dream, the fruitless chasing of a shadow."[2] From this time he became increasingly preoccupied with the thought of eternity, and was gradually "weaned from the ardour for scientific pursuits."[3] He lost himself "in an elysium of delight."[4] "A strain of emotions, soothing, tranquil, and elevating,"[5] took the place of anxious activity in secular affairs.

This Evangelical experience was not unusual in the late eighteenth century. There were similar conversions, notably in the Clapham Sect.[6] Nor is there any direct,

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1 Ibid, p. 152.
2 Ibid, p. 153.
3 Ibid, p. 204.
4 Ibid, p. 107
5 Ibid, p. 113
6 See Hopkins, op. cit. p. 144.

demonstratable connection with revolutionary forces. There is a suggestion of what Berdyaev has termed "humanist self-affirmation and self-sufficiency"[1], which is essentially what the Revolution, or Godwinism, signified for Chalmers. And if the foregoing analysis is correct, the effects of the humanist conditioning continued to motivate Chalmers after he had given up his hopes in the Revolution, or in radical principles. Not until death had twice entered his family, and he himself had narrowly escaped death, did he realize the profound need for his father's faith, and the relative unimportance of his secular pursuits. Death was the indisputable proof of man's ultimate helplessness; and a confrontation with death and eternity

> . . .shook the confident young soul which had hitherto thought of nothing but the questions of science, and the onward sweep and rush of a high career. . .H.He could no longer impose his vehement will upon the world, and carry everything before him. Something more was in the tragedy of life than had been dreamt of in his philosophy.[2]

Berdyaev has remarked that the humanist idea of progress, and humanistic self-affirmation, became involved in a tragic contradiction. Humanism achieved freedom from religious heteronomy, but in so doing, it occasioned a rather fearful sense of insecurity and anxiety. In such a situation, the tendency is to seek "deviations from the path of freedom

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1 Nicolas Berdyaev, The Meaning of History, p. 197.
2 Mrs. Oliphant, op. cit., p. 41.

to that of compulsion and necessity,"[1] and so to lose the positive gains of humanism. In the French revolutionary era, it is obvious that in France, docile obedience to a dictator was one such "deviation" from the ambiguous freedom of the Revolution. But in a less obvious, and more creative, way, emotional naturalism and Evangelicalism could also provide ways of escape.

And if, as Prof. Willey remarks, in England, "emotional naturalism turned almost inevitably into Toryism, or something akin to it,"[2] the same ethical tendency was manifested in the Evangelicalism of Chalmers and other Scottish Evangelicals.

Patriotism and Political Economy

'Nature' and patriotic 'nationalism'. For the student of the eighteenth century, no concept is more difficult to grasp than that of 'Nature'. To 'live according to Nature', to keep 'close to Nature', was familiar advice to contemporaries of Alexander Pope; and, equally so, to those of Rousseau and Godwin. But Nature meant one thing to Pope, and something else to Rousseau. To Holbach, Nature was a sort of sanction for revolutionary change, with something of the ethical dynamic of Hebrew prophetism; to Burke, Nature also had religious connotations, but, without the belief in human

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1 See Berdyaev, op. cit., pp. 202,3.
2 Op. cit., p. 210.

perfectibility, the symbol became a 'priestly' sanction for maintaining the status quo. Prof. Willey has excellently summarized this difficult tangle of meanings:

> Our problem turns upon the degree of human participation which is supposed to be needed to produce the best world. Burke, or the 'Tory' Wordsworth, desires the minimum of this; Nature (history) produces what is best (most natural), and our part is to realize the complexity of things, explaining where we can, and reverencing where we cannot. The Liberal (Priestley or Adam Smith) wants us to leave Nature to itself, but first to remove the 'artificial' restrictions with which wicked men have somehow hampered it. The Revolutionary wants the maximum of human action to fashion all things fair: 'Nature' left to itself produces jungles and slums; if we want better conditions we must make them ourselves. This view was implicit in Holbach and the Jacobin philosophy generally, but the eighteenth century reverence for Nature prevented it from reaching full theoretic development until the time of Marx.[1]

So, it is a question of man's rôle in history; to what extent should he interfere in the affairs of Nature in moulding its processes to suit his desires and his needs?

Chalmers's position, just after the turn of the century, is clearly contrary to the revolutionary strategy. In his chemistry lectures at St. Andrews, he deplored all "rank and reckless innovations,"[2] preferring (with Burke) that which has grown to that which is made.[3] If he had been critical of Pitt's war policy and resentful of the conduct of his superiors, these criticisms were laid aside

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1 Ibid, p. 207.
2 Hanna, op. cit., p. 60.
3 Quoted from J. Morley's Burke, by Willey, op. cit., p. 243.

when the military despotism of Napoleon began seriously to threaten the British Isles. By 1802 a new and grave menace had aroused the British Nation:

> The threat of invasion, while it combined all parties in the defence of the country, raised the confidence of the people in those who trusted them with arms, and gave them the pleasure of playing at soldiers. Instead of Jacobinism, Invasion became the word.[1]

The war with France (after a brief respite) broke out afresh about the time Chalmers settled in Kilmany (1802), and for some time afterwards the memories of the reign of terror were submerged in the day-to-day menace of an invasion from across the Channel. Internal conflicts were forgotten; Whigs and Tories joined their forces in a common determination to resist the common enemy. The aid of ministers was solicited, in an effort to marshal the full support of all the people. Chalmers's pulpit in Kilmany sounded the alarm in no uncertain tone:

> May that day when Bonaparte ascends the Throne of Britain be the last of my existence; may I be the first to ascend the scaffold he erects to extinguish the worth and spirit of the country; may my blood mingle with the blood of patriots; and may I die at the foot of that altar on which British independence is to be the victim.[2]

This is Burke's patriotic 'nationalism'. It is fighting Napoleonism with the revolutionary élan. Such a spectacular

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[1] Cockburn's Memorials, p. 164.
[2] See Hanna, op. cit., pp. 95,6.

display of vehemence suggests Chalmers's earlier outbursts of strong feeling against the aristocracy. But the sermon was more than mere extravagant emulation; the young and dynamic parson was ready to bear his part in the defence effort. He became a member of the St.Andrews Volunteer Corps, soon after they were organized, and for some time held a double commission as chaplain and lieutenant. In 1805 he joined the Corps at Kirkcaldy where it was then on permanent duty.[1]

In 1808, Chalmers published his first book, An Enquiry into the Extent and Stability of National Resources. Chalmers was inspired by the conviction that the expansionism of the French revolutionists could not be effectively met by a "mere combination of effete dynasties, but only by the awakening of a national spirit as ardent as their own."[2] He appeals, therefore, to the people of Britain to combine the energy and sacrificial loyalty of a despotism (such as that in France) with the force and spirit of liberty, in the defence of freedom and the British way of life. However, this patriotic zeal seems to have been still rather immature and compulsive. Chalmers was not yet the confirmed Tory who had carefully and minutely (in the manner of Wordsworth) reconstructed his development from the optimism of 1793 to the disappointments of 1796-7 and beyond. The 'Tory

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1 Ibid, p. 96.

2 This citation is from Willey's description of Burke, op. cit. p. 251.

creed' was to be defined later.

His political, economic, and social creed. In 1818, on the occasion of the death of Queen Charlotte, he did state the essence of his political creed. It was no confession of past mistakes or errors of judgment, but the speaker was undoubtedly a loyal Tory:

> There appears to be nothing in the progress of religion which is at all calculated to level the gradations of human ranks, or to do away the distinctions of human society. Not to annihilate poverty, for it is said of the poor that they shall be with us always; not to bring down from their eminence the authorities of the land, for there is positively nothing in the Bible that can lead us to infer that even under the peace and righteousness of a millenial age there will not be kings and queens upon the earth; and certain it is that they will be the instruments of helping forward this great moral consummation--the former being the nursing fathers, and the latter the nursing mothers of the Church. The Utopianism which would regenerate the world by political and external revolutions, is, I trust, at this time of day, pretty generally exploded. [italics not in original]. The kingdoms of the earth may become the kingdoms of God and of his Christ with the external framework of these present governments, and at least with all those varieties of outward conditions which are offered at this moment to the view of the observer. There must be a way in which Christianity can accomodate itself to this framework--a mode by which it can animate all the parts and all the members of it--a mode by which, without the overthrow of existing distinctions, it can establish a right reciprocity of feeling and of conduct between them--a charm by which it can divest grandeur of all its disdainfulness, and poverty of all its violence, and chasing away all the asperities of party from the land, can, from the monarch's throne to the peasant's hovel, bind together the whole of a Christianized nation under the influence of one common charity.[1]

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[1] Sermons, "On the Death of Queen Charlotte". Quoted by Hanna, op. cit., vol. ii, pp. 202-203.

It would be difficult to frame a statement further removed from, or more directly antithetical to, the principles which inspired the French Revolution. Chalmers now appears as an apostle of the conservatism of Burke; indeed, he is more conservative with regard to social inequities than was Burke. It is not the business of Christianity, he affirms, to disturb the social order; the peasant is in his hovel and the monarch on his throne because God has so ordained it. Religion must seek to diffuse its fragrance through every part and on every level of the hierarchical framework. Thus, will the wealthy be modest and the poor will be tranquil. When he came to deal with England's system of Pauperism (legalized charity), Chalmers accused the sponsors of the Poor Laws with encouraging irresponsibility, and also making the poor dissatisfied with their more fortunate superiors.

Did he retain any of the 'glowing prospects' as to the future of society, springing out of political emancipation? He certainly renounced the idea of human perfectibility. But he remained a firm believer in progress. If his political sentiments were essentially those of Burke, his economic principles derived mainly from Adam Smith (and the Scottish liberal tradition generally), though in reacting against the excesses of the French Revolution he diverged rather sharply from some of Smith's views. Like Smith and the French Economists, he held that the function

of government was to protect property, to encourage liberty, and nothing more. He agreed with the Physiocrats (as over against Smith) in opposing all indirect taxation, in favour of a single tax on land. There should be no redistribution of property--no multiplying of property owners. Such a system

> . . .must tend to vulgarize a community, by absorbing, in the mere subsistence of an ever-increasing multitude of owners, what is now divided in subsistence for those who yield in return for it a thousand elegancies and enjoyments that would have been otherwise unknown.[1]

He believed that the revolutionary reformers had ruined France by breaking up the large landed estates and turning them over to "a mighty and ever-increasing swarm of smaller and smaller agrarians." In such a situation a despot would invariably rise "like a giant among the pigmies, or as an unsupported May-pole in the midst of a level population."[2]

To the objection that these enjoyments were monopolized by a few, he replied that this meant more taxes for the support of Christian education and other benefits from which all would eventually profit. Such a system of landed property as he advocated (in his Political Economy) was, he felt, a guarantee for the maintenance of sufficient leisure to call forth an authorship "that is ever keeping the mind of society in vigorous play, and adorning it with

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1 Thomas Chalmers, Political Economy, p. 364.
2 Quoted from Political Economy by Hanna, op. cit., vol. iv, p.55.

the graces of taste and cultivation."[1] From the higher galaxy of rank and fortune would fall the "droppings of a bland and benignant influence on a general platform of humanity."[2] This is, of course, Burke's 'age of chivalry', around which Chalmers throws the ardour which he once felt for revolutionary principles:

> There is a soul in chivalry, which, though nursed in the bosom of affluence, does not cloister there; but passes abroad from mind to mind, and lights up a certain glow of inspiration throughout the mass of a community.[3]

Social evolution through Christian education. As for the social problems of poverty, unemployment, production, and the rest, Chalmers was again confident in "Nature's own simple mechanism"--mutual self-help--, if only positive laws could be replaced by adequate Christian education: "The virtue of humanity ought never to have been legalized, but left to the spontaneous workings of man's own willing and compassionate nature."[4] He never tired of reiterating that the solution of all society's problems was to make people good; high character must be achieved first, and then social and economic improvements would automatically follow. He would not admit that positive laws and Christian nurture were complementary; rather, he deprecated all suggestions of statutory interference in dealing with social maladjustments and injustices.

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[1] Political Economy, p. 365. [2] Ibid, p. 367.
[3] Quoted by Hanna, op. cit., p. 555. [4] Pol. Econ., p. 415.

Most of this, Chalmers had learned from the venerable Adam Smith. But to the laisser-faire principles of Smith and the French Economists there have been joined, curiously, the conservatism of Burke, and an enthusiasm which has much in common with Priestley and the liberalism of the nineteenth century.

Chalmers's Political Economy appeared about the time the Reform Bill was passed by Parliament. He was not among the company of those who regarded the Bill as a long-awaited panacea; it appeared to him like a vain attempt to elevate uneducated people to responsibilities which they did not understand. As they had 'played' at being soldiers during the threat of invasion, so now they would 'play' with the vote. Extending the franchise, he feared, would not affect any great and good change in society; instead, it would divert the labouring man's attention away from self-improvement to the affairs in the House of Commons. In the air of excitement over the Reform Bill, Chalmers's solution of gradual amelioration, through the culture of the mind and the spiritual life, could hardly have elicited the generous response which the author of Political Economy thought it deserved. After so many years of hardships and repression under Tory rule, the public was not in a mood to appreciate Tory gradualism.

It should be said at this point that while Chalmers rose in rebellion against the revolutionary scheme for

elevating the masses, he did profess to accept the goal of the revolutionary: an equal share for every man in the world's abundance. This end was to be achieved, he thought, not by wresting it from the hands of the wealthier classes, but by "the insensible growth of their own virtue."[1] His insistence on general education was itself a revolutionary proposal, and it was certainly not unrelated to the enlightened humanitarianism which the French Revolution encouraged.

But while Chalmers appeals to Nature to uphold the social and political status quo, he is a Calvinist when he argues for religious establishments and Church extension. Here again Chalmers can appeal to Nature to resolve the inconsistency of this position: Man's natural desire for material and physical needs are such as to justify the economic free market, but there is no such general desire or demand for Christian instruction. This, he felt, was true of all education. Neither religious nor secular education should be left to the wishes of the general public, and the maintenance and extension of all educational institutions should be at public expense. It was mischievous folly to leave them to find their way on an 'open market', or, in the name of tolerance, to suppose that

> . . . .a government should, as a government, be lifeless of all regard to things sacred; and maintaining a calm and philosophic indifference to all the modes and

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[1] Quoted by Mrs. Oliphant, op. cit., p. 174.

> varieties of religious belief, should refuse to entertain the question, in which of these varieties the people ought to be trained--or rather, make it wholly the affair of the people themselves.[1]

Chalmers was conscious of a feeling and a theory which was then working "strongly and strangely" to separate the affairs of the Church from those of the State. Such a tendency was, of course, at least as old as the Anabaptist movement, but it seems likely that Chalmers was referring particularly to the spreading effects of the French Revolution.

Nature and the 'moral preventive check'. As to the question of population, Chalmers agreed with Malthus on the necessity of curbing the growth of population, but he rejected the latter's pessimistic conclusion. His solution for this problem was essentially the same as his remedy for other social maladjustments: the cultivation, through the preaching of the gospel and through Christian education, of moral principles, and leave the rest to Nature. Like Malthus and Ricardo, Chalmers believed that the problems created by the Industrial Revolution were really insoluble by positive law schemes; all meddling by individuals or by governments would only make bad situations worse. Upon the natural order alone was laid the whole burden of effecting an adjustment.[2] Whether such acceptance of the human situation issued in

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[1] T. Chalmers, Lectures on Religious Establishments, p.20.

[2] See J. H. Randall's The Making of the Modern Mind, Chapter XIV.

pessimism (as with Malthus and Ricardo), or in optimism (as with Chalmers), it is not difficult to see why it gave to the possessors of power and wealth an 'easy' conscience. A further quotation will summarize the political principles and ethical strategy of Chalmers:

> We would, therefore, on the whole, leave the existing framework of our own community undisturbed; and, instead of letting down the peerage of our realms to the external condition of our peasantry, we should rather go forth among the peasantry, and do all that lies within the compass of education, both to elevate their standard of comfort, and to pour such a moral lustre over them, as might equalize them, either to peers or to princes in all the loftiest attributes of humanity.[1]

But such a Christian strategy, however conservative the intentions, would not leave the social 'chain of being' intact. The evangelism of John Wesley had demonstrated this. And, though Chalmers regretted the passing of the Reform Bill, it is at least possible that his own evangelical efforts had actually contributed something to this achievement.

Ecclesiastical Revolt

The Voluntary Controversy. During the French revolutionary period there probably was not much serious opposition from Scottish Evangelicals within the Church of Scotland to the operation of the patronage law. One

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[1] Political Economy, p. 370.

explanation for this is to be found in the influence of the Evangelical quietists in England. But, also, patronage did not usually involve any serious, practical problems.[1] Mathieson thinks there is good reason to believe that as the loyalty and efficiency of the Evangelicals became known, the heritors in the country parishes were encouraged to consult the people with regard to the presentee. The reason for this leniency, according to Mathieson, was that, "as the political demands of the people could not be conceded, it was the more prudent to allow them some freedom in the choice of pastors."[2] But this only delayed a crisis which, sooner or later, had to be faced. The crisis came in the wake of the political events of the eighteen-thirties.

The year 1830 brought the second French Revolution. It also saw the dawning of a new ecclesiastical era in Scotland. The Roman Catholic Relief Bill (giving British Catholics the rights of citizenship) had been passed in the previous year. The Whigs, supported by public pressure, were gathering momentum for the final drive towards political reform. Such an atmosphere could hardly fail to encourage the popular elements in Scottish Presbyterianism. The United Secession[3] came out openly in support of the voluntary

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1 There were exceptions, e.g., in the Highlands.
2 Op. cit., pp. 112,13.
3 A union of the Burgher and Anti-burgher Churches.

(ecclesiastical) principle, as against religious establishment, and the Popular movement was beginning to gain ground among Evangelicals, within and without the Establishment. The voluntaryists were not content with a mere reform of the abuses of patronage. Instead, they insisted that Church and State were functionally distinct, and that they should therefore be organically separate. The State existed solely to conduct secular affairs and it was not its duty to teach religion, or in any way to support religious institutions.

It hardly needs to be said that Dr. Chalmers was not in sympathy with the voluntaryists. Throughout the controversy which followed, and which eventually culminated in a disruption of the Established Church, Chalmers insisted on the complete independence of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in their internal and spiritual affairs, and also on the right of every local congregation to an effective voice (the right to a 'veto') in the presentation of its minister. But he declared that he was not against patronage, per se, and he remained an ardent believer in the Establishment. Also, he denied that the ecclesiastical issue at stake had anything to do with political democracy. In some of his fellow-vetoists Chalmers thought he did detect "a distinct affection for the popular element, per se, a certain democratic affection." They talked of the 'rights of the Christian people!' This was, however, a foreign note: "Our watchword differs from theirs. It is

'the Christian good of the people!'" This, he was sure, was an important distinction, because some people had confused "the cause of evangelism in the Church with the cause of radicalism in the State." This distinction might remain a subtle mystery to rulers; the humblest Methodist understood it perfectly. The sole reason for wanting to popularize the appointment of clergymen was "because of it being the likely stepping stone to a more efficient ministry."[1].

But the Scottish Reformation and the French Revolution were not so completely different as Chalmers imagined; and despite his insistence that the affection, in the contemporary controversy, was "singly and exclusively for the theological,"[2], the agitation for ecclesiastical independence in Scotland had a great deal in common with the victorious political struggle, the immediate fruits of which were the Reform Bill and a revived, demanding populace. With such unbounded enthusiasm did the people of Scotland receive the news of the passing of the Reform Bill that it was thought by some that the downfall of all existing institutions was imminent.[3]These developments augured ill for the defenders of Church patronage. Indeed, the Establishment itself was in danger, unless its supporters could show that by its alliance with the State, the Church did not necessarily forfeit

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1 See a pamphlet written by Chalmers, What Should the Church and the People of Scotland Do Now?, p. 29.
2 Loc. cit.
3 Craig, op. cit., p. 367.

a part of her original birthright of freedom.

Under the taunts of the voluntaryists, some of the supporters of patronage attempted to demonstrate that the Church had not lost her powers of self-determination. Chalmers persisted in his belief that the abuses of patronage could be dealt with without fundamental changes in the existing laws. However, the ensuing controversy led to an encounter with the civil authorities which proved to him that he had been mistaken.

The Disruption. The details leading up to the Disruption cannot be pursued further here. During the year preceding the General Assembly of 1843, Chalmers was busy gathering funds and laying an organizational foundation on which could be built the Free Church of Scotland, should all last-minute attempts at reconciliation fail. On the eve of the great crisis which saw more than four hundred--or about one-third--of the Evangelical clergy withdraw from the General Assembly, Chalmers wrote to a friend in America:

> I am glad to say that the great bulk and body of the common people, with a goodly proportion of the middle classes, are upon our side, though it bodes ill for the country that the higher classes are almost universally against us.[1]

The movement was definitely supported by 'the people,' whose sentiments were closely akin to the sentiments of those

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[1] Hanna, op. cit., vol. iv, p. 333.

who had earlier borne along the cause of radical reform. "He became," says Sir Henry Craik of Chalmers, "in spite of himself, and he did all he could to make his Church, democratic not in aim only but in methods."[1]

Was there in Chalmers a hidden kinship with Thomas Muir and his fellow-sufferers, which had stirred almost to conscious life at this late stage in his life? Writing to Lord Lorne in 1842, he says that though he has no sympathy himself for patronage, he was willing for the sake of maintaining a harmonious relationship between the Church and the Government to have accepted it as a practical expedient. But the "foolish Conservatives" had prevented such an adjustment, and with all his "native preference for the position of the extreme gauche" on the question, he would willingly go along with them. If some charged the Church with inconsistency, it was due to the

> . . .impracticable obstinacy of the extreme droit, who, whether we look to ecclesiastical or to secular politics, will be found the real, though not the proximate causes, of all the violent and precipitate changes which take place in society.[2]

Was he aware that he was repeating the charge of earlier martyrs for political reform in England and Scotland? And when the vast audience in the first Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland arose in his honour, "cheering for some

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1 Craik, op. cit,, p. 354.
2 Correspondence of Thomas Chalmers, edited by Hanna, p. 392.

minutes with the utmost enthusiasm, and the house presenting a perfect forest of hats and handkerchiefs,"[1] could Dr. Chalmers have been unaware that the crowds of lower class, working people saw in him the symbol of their political and religious freedom and their national integrity?

But Thomas Chalmers will remain an intriguing and, in some respects, an enigmatic personality in Scottish Church History. A zealous Evangelical, he outdid the Moderates in championing a strong Church which he insisted should be an engine of social amelioration. Where the Moderates had failed to read and adjust to the signs of the times, Chalmers took their own theories and invested them with zeal and fresh optimism. And though his political sympathy continued to be on the Tory side, he bequeathed to that large section which became the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland a spirit that for some time afterwards was an important support of Scottish Whiggism.

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1 Hanna, op. cit., vol. iv, p. 340.

the past two centuries. The contemporary revolution in Asia confronts the ecumenical Church (and especially the American Churches) with challenging problems which are similar to those considered in the foregoing studies. Religious leaders have too often and too unequivocally

Chapter IV

ROBERT HALDANE: EVANGELICAL WITHDRAWAL

Consideration of certain aspects of the life and work of Robert Haldane takes us into the center of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Scottish Evangelicalism. Haldane, in some respects, stood in marked contrast to the subject of the preceding chapter. But they both came warmly to embrace the Evangelical gospel; and Haldane, no less than Chalmers, was profoundly affected by the currents of revolt and reaction.

The purpose here is to relate the Independent Scottish Evangelical movement, directed and sponsored largely by the elder Haldane, to the forces which have already been considered; to analyze the motives which caused the Evangelicals and the social and political radicals to interact upon each other--if they did do so; and to see what were the basic differences. There is not much in Haldane's theological writings which is of concern to this particular research. Whereas Chalmers kept up a lively interest in the affairs of the State, as well as those of the Church, Haldane, insofar as he could, deliberately withdrew from politics, in order more effectively to extend the spiritual movement which in Scotland came to be associated with his name and that of his brother. However, in his Address to the Public

concerning Political Opinions,[1] Haldane has left us what seems to be a reliable account of how and to what extent he was affected by the French Revolution.

Preparation for the Haldanes

The failure of the Moderates. In Scotland, it was the decline of the Moderate Party--the dominant party in the Church of Scotland until near the close of the eighteenth century--which opened the way for the successes of the Haldanes and their associates. Moderatism (as we have seen) had solid achievements to its credit: It had gone far towards freeing the popular mind from an intolerable narrow religious heteronomy, and it had helped to open the way for the emergence of men of letters, and for the cultivation of interest in science, philosophy, and literature. Its optimism was carried to excess, but its original, Hutchinsonian faith in human nature bore needed, practical fruits. However, later Moderatism failed even to achieve its own avowed end: to fill the pulpits with able, well-trained ministers who could speak to and gain the respect men of importance in the secular world. And what was even more important, the Moderate leaders failed to reckon seriously with the challenge of the lower orders, within and

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1 In this chapter, this work will be referred to in the notes as Address.

without the Church.

The Moderates were not equipped to deal with the multitude of non-intellectuals--the factory-workers and tenant-farmers--to many of whom the Industrial Revolution had brought added hardship and frustration. Leaders in the Moderate party were right in feeling that the narrow, irrational religion of the seventeenth century could not meet the needs of their own day. But their own rationalistic frame of reference and their own vested interest (later Moderatism especially) kept them from understanding the real significance of Rousseau and his fellow-rebels against history in France, the agitation of the working classes in England and Scotland, and the earlier and later Evangelical revivals. Moderatism could neither direct these forces, nor prevent them from emerging and expanding. "In the presence of the great outburst of revolution in France," writes Hector MacPherson, "the drawing-room optimism of the Scottish school seemed an elegant mockery."[1]

The failure of the Seceders. The Seceders, though they attracted large numbers at first, were also unable to provide guidance and spiritual refuge for the oppressed and fearful during the storm-and-stress period. The Relief Church, originally more in touch with the people, and far

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[1] Scotland's Battle for Spiritual Independence. p. 172.

less sectarian than the other Secederes, gradually retreated from its forward position after about 1795. As for the rest of the Secession, they consistently restricted themselves by a narrow sectarian bias which militated against the sort of aggressive evangelism which was carried on by Wesley and Whitefield, and later by the Haldanes and other Independents. It was this drawn-out battle of attrition between the Established Church on the one hand, and the Seceding groups on the other, which consumed so much precious religious energy and which largely made possible and inevitable the successes of the Haldanes. The new temper which was awakened at the French Revolution found a response in Scotland outside organized ecclesiastical bodies. This temper was of a nature congenial to Independent Evangelicalism, which was emerging in many parts of Scotland, and of which Robert Haldane became an outstanding symbol.

Robert Haldane before 1789

Independence and adventure. It is interesting to compare the early life of Robert Haldane with that of Thomas Chalmers, in relation to the French Revolution. Haldane, born in 1764, was, of course, much older than Chalmers. At the commencement of the period when everything in Scotland was beginning to feel the impact of the Continental Revolution, Robert Haldane was a rather mature laird. He had finished his university education, had seen a great deal

more of the world than all but a few of his Scottish contemporaries, and he had retired to his inherited estate as a prosperous and respected country gentleman. Age and wealth, then, at the outset, put Haldane in a different category from Chalmers in 1789.

But there were other fundamental dissimilarities. Robert Haldane became an orphan at the age of ten.[1] He and his younger sister and brother were left in the care of his grandmother and an uncle. Not long afterwards, in 1776, his sister died, and in the following year the two boys lost their grandmother. Thus, whereas personal and family illness came rather late in the Chalmers family, radically affecting Thomas Chalmers's once-buoyant earthly expectations, Robert Haldane experienced the frustration of human tragedy quite early in life, prior to his adventures and achievements.

Furthermore, the lines along which Haldane was reared, both before and after he became an orphan, ran in different (though not in opposite) directions from the rather rigid authoritarianism which conditioned Chalmers's early life. Haldane's parents were devout Protestants; in his mother he saw an example of piety and maternal devotion which deeply affected him. But there is no indication that this piety was associated with either doctrinal or ecclesiastical

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[1] These biographical particulars are taken from Alexander Haldane's Lives of Robert and James Haldane, Chapter I.

coercion. Nor does it seem to have been incompatible with normal social relationships and pleasures. This is to say, Robert Haldane did not have the cause or the compulsion to rebel against obstacles, as had Chalmers. If Haldane's mother was broad and tolerant, his grandmother was even more so. Also, from his father, and later from his uncle, Robert acquired a taste for adventure. This prompted him to leave unfinished his course in the University of Edinburgh, and follow his uncle into the Royal Navy. However, he remained with his brother in Edinburgh long enough to be influenced by the bracing discipline of Dr. Adam, rector of the High School which they attended. The two brothers boarded with the rector, whose house faced the large mansion, then occupied by the Lord Advocate, Henry Dundas. Many years later, James Haldane related how, in winter, Dr. Adam, when he called the boys in the morning, used to point to the burning candle through the Lord Advocate's window, reminding them that this great man had been at work for two hours while they were sleeping.

It is worth noting that throughout this period--at least, prior to his separation from his brother--Robert felt and was responsive to the lingering piety of his mother. The two brothers often discussed together their mother's religious faith, and Robert had boyish ideas of being a minister in the Church of Scotland. He was easily dissuaded from this notion, however, mainly because of a

budding, romantic desire to follow his uncle into the navy, and to experience the thrills of life at sea. This he did in 1780. The abruptness with which he left the university[1] is evidence of both a large measure of independence, and a responsiveness to the sub-rational call to a kind of life which satisfied the senses and imagination. About three years later, after having adapted himself well and earned for himself a good reputation as a naval officer, he retired from the navy as abruptly as he had entered it. While in the navy, Haldane seems to have entered quite willingly and with pride and zest into all the experiences afforded by his profession. He was brought into contact with life in the French Navy; and he saw something of the injustice and oppression which existed in the British Navy.

Evangelical influences. Leaving the navy at the age of twenty, Haldane spent several months at Gosport, in the company of Dr. David Bogue, an Independent minister whom he had met earlier.[2] The two made a tour which included Paris and the Netherlands. Afterwards, in the latter part of 1784, Haldane returned to the University of Edinburgh and resumed his studies. In the following spring , he set out on a much longer tour, which took him to the principal cities of Holland, Germany, Italy, France, and Switzerland. Returning

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[1] See Ibid, p. 28.

[2] Ibid, pp. 39 ff.

to Scotland, he married and settled on his estate, to the improvement of which he devoted the greater part of his time and energy for the next eight or nine years.

The influence of Dr. Bogue on Haldane must have been considerable. Bogue was pastor of an Independent congregation in Gosport, and he was a fervent sympathizer with the French Revolution. At the outbreak of the Revolution, he shared the optimistic enthusiasm of other English Dissenters. He was convinced that the civil governments of Europe, linked to 'Popery', constituted the most formidable of all obstacles to religion and to the regeneration of mankind. He, therefore, hailed the Revolution in France as an "omen of better days for mankind."[1] News of the Revolution filled him with boundless optimism. It was the

> . . . harbinger of religion, sent to give notice of arrival. . . . I cannot but consider the present zeal for liberty, which so generally prevails, as designed by the great Governor of the world as a preparatory step to the extending of the Redeemer's kingdom.[2]

That the divine instruments, in this case, were infidels and atheists did not disturb his prophetic hope. He appealed to Christians to launch a great world-embracing enterprise on this rising tide of revolutionary social and political change. Every change in the moral world was linked with the

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[1] James Bennett, Memoirs of David Bogue, p. 137.
[2] Ibid, p. 139.

progress of religion.

However, Bogue himself was no political reformer. He was severely mortified when he was subpoenaed as a witness during the trial of Thomas Hardy for seditious activity. He had not, he pleaded, been a member of any political society, had attended no political meeting, nor did he use his power to vote.[1] Like so many of his contemporaries, Bogue had evidently misjudged the meaning and the dimensions of the French Revolution. He had regarded it abstractly as a great step towards religious freedom and a decisive defeat for the Roman Church; it was not so much a historical phenomenon, brought about by particular men, as the divinely ordered prelude to the Christian millennium.[2] Bogue is typical of the withdrawing type of Evangelicalism. So long as the Revolution could be fitted into the divine scheme of things, and so long as it did not involve him, as a Christian, in concrete political action, he could rejoice in it as "an omen of better days for mankind." Without ever renouncing his principles, he withdrew when these principles were translated into action. Robert Haldane (as we shall see) followed a similar strategy. This is not surprising, in view of the fact that he and his brother "attended his [Bogue's] ministry, their reading was directed by his sound judgment, and their books both on land and at

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[1] Ibid, p. 243. [2] Ibid, p. 144

sea were selected by him."[1]

The Romantic and Humanitarian Awakening

The 'dawn of liberty'. There is never any doubt that the French Revolution played a dominant part in the life and thought of Robert Haldane, during the period from about 1792 to about 1795. Fortunately, we know considerably more about Haldane's conscious impressions of the Revolution than we do about those of Chalmers, largely because opposition pressure led Haldane to publish a lengthy statement of his sentiments and activities relative to politics. This was in the year 1800.

In his Address to the Public, Haldane gives what appears to be a frank account of the impact of the French Revolution upon him:

> Before the French Revolution, having nothing to rouse my mind, I lived in the country, almost wholly engrossed by country pursuits, little concerned about the general interests or happiness of mankind . . . . As to religion, I contented myself with that general profession which is so common and so worthless, and that form of godliness which completely denies its power. I endeavoured to be decent, and what is called moral, but was ignorant of my lost state by nature, and of the deep depravity and corruption of my heart. . . . . When politics began to be talked of, I was led to consider everything anew. I eagerly catched at them as a pleasing speculation. As a fleeting phantom, they eluded my grasp; but missing the shadow, I caught the substance; and, while obliged to abandon these confessedly empty and unsatisfactory pursuits, I obtained, in some measure, the solid consolations of the gospel;

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[1] J. B., Memoir of Robert Haldane and J. H., with Sketches of their friends, p. 24.

> so that I may say as Paul . . . 'He was found of me who sought him not.'[1]

Haldane is here primarily concerned to show how the religious change in his life came about. He evidently regards the French Revolution as the means of Providence, not to provoke him to social and political action, but to rouse him out of his spiritual sleep; political concerns were the 'shadow' which, under, God, lured him to the 'substance.' Afterwards, the former were discarded.

But Haldane knew that it would require more explanation than this to disarm his critics and the general public. He had by 1800 acquired a reputation, not only as a sponsor of Evangelical enterprises, but also as somewhat of a champion of revolutionary ideas. And in this connection he was looked upon by some of his contemporaries as a renegade from the Church of Scotland, who was determined to undermine the religious establishment.

Before the French Revolution, Haldane seems to have been the usual laird--unusually prosperous and imaginative, perhaps, but certainly no social or political innovator. Just when his interest in politics was aroused, we do not know with certainty.[2] It was when politics began to be discussed that he was "led to consider everything anew." This

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1 Pp. 13, 14; cf. The conversion of Chalmers, ante 62.
2 A. Haldane's dates here are misleading.

might have been in the early part of 1793, after the reign of terror in France, or it could have been earlier. Before 1789 he had read Delolme's Treatise, and Blackstone on the laws of England; also, he read, with great satisfaction, Smith's Wealth of Nations. After the commencement of the French Revolution, he read Burke's Reflections, together with the replies of Mackintosh and Paine, and the pro-Gallic pamphlets of Christie, Barlow, Priestley, and others.[1] Neither Godwin's name nor his Political Justice appears either in A. Haldane's biography or in any of the preserved writings of Robert Haldane, and, except for an incidental remark in the Anti-Jacobin Review, there does not seem to be any mention of Rousseau or the French philosophes; he might well have been familiar with both Godwin's writings and those of the philosophes. However, with Haldane (more than with Chalmers) it was the French Revolution itself, and not merely the reciprocal effects of the Revolution in Britain, which caused an inner awakening and stimulated enthusiasm.

He did not agree completely with those who wrote in defence of the Revolution, but, on the whole, his sympathy was on their side. He rejoiced in the experiment which the French were making "of the construction of a government at once from its foundation upon a regular plan,

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[1] A. Haldane, op. cit., p. 86.

which Hume . . . speaks of as an event so much to be desired."[1] Thus, it seems that Haldane's interest was gradually stirred by the events in France, and the consequent prospects of political and social amelioration which he envisaged for France and for other countries, as a result of the Revolution. If this was at first a dispassionate interest, it grew in intensity."In every company," he says, "I delighted in discussing this favourite subject, and endeavoured to point out the vast advantages that I thought might be expected as the result."[2] The overthrow of feudalism, which had been upheld by a corrupt aristocracy and a proud, degenerate Church, stirred Haldane's hopes:

> He saw, or imagined he saw, looming through the mist, the prospect of a new and better order of things, when oppression and immorality would cease, and Governments would be regulated by a paramount regard for the welfare of the people. He admitted that good and evil were wildly contending for the mastery, but he was sanguine as to the result.[3]

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1 Address, p. 4.

2 Loc. cit. A. Haldane (op. cit., p. 85) records an incident which occurred after Robert Haldane's political awakening. The latter often joined in discussions on the subject of the French Revolution; he "often took pleasure in startling the prejudices of narrow-minded lairds, for whom prospects of social amelioration had no charm." On this particular occasion the discussion was prolonged, and "heated with wine, and excited by argument," Haldane rode his horse wildly through broken ground and the woods of Pendrich and Airthrey, without regard to the risk to which he was exposing himself.

3 A. Haldane, op. cit., p. 82.

He had intimate discussions with several clergymen who lived near his estate, and he widely differed from them. He was convinced that most of the enormities of the French were due solely to the state of degradation in which the people were held under the old régime.

On the other hand, Haldane disapproved of political societies. He did not attend their meetings, and he refused to support them in any way.[1] He gives two reasons for adopting this attitude: First, he thought that in the societies "the minds of the people were much more likely to be inflamed than informed," and the end-result was likely to be confusion rather than reformation. In the second place, what was happening abroad was a French experiment, and he wished to learn from the French what the outcome would be. In the meantime, his normal intercourse with other members of his social class continued. Throughout 1793, and as late as the summer of 1794, he maintained good relations with members who held responsible positions in the Government, including Lord Advocate Dundas.[2]

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[1] He "highly disapproved" of the conduct of Thomas Hardy, Horne Tooke, and Thelwall, and refused to contribute anything towards their relief, though they were acquitted of the charge of sedition; see A. Haldane, op. cit., pp. 87, 111.

[2] Ibid, pp. 83,4. Haldane was extremely desirous to clear himself and the Evangelical movement from public suspicions of secret disloyalty. The Government was on the verge of repressing Independent Evangelical activities. However, the account which he gives is not contradicted, factually, by his enemies. Haldane was never an active reformer.

The Stirling address. It was in July, 1794, that Haldane made the speech which alienated many of his friends. A meeting of the freeholders of the county of Stirling had been called to consider the propriety of forming armed volunteer corps throughout the country. Until this time, the prosperous laird had not publicly announced his views on politics. But now when he was called on, he determined frankly to state his opinions, relative to the war and to the raising of volunteers. In his prepared speech he let it be known that he was against Britain's entering the war. He, therefore, was against the raising of fresh recruits, which would only enable the Government to persist in sending troops abroad, would prolong the war, and would add nothing to the country's internal security. It had been rumoured that throughout the country there were many who were disaffected from the Government. In this case, Haldane argued, the present measure for arming volunteers might be dangerous: it could furnish arms for the disaffected as well as for the loyal. If not dangerous, it was at least an attempt to control the country by force. And if the majority of the people were disaffected, this would be impossible; if otherwise, it would be unnecessary.[1]

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1 See Address, p. 8. This argumentum ad hominum reflects something of the panic and general suspicion which prevailed in July, 1794, though Haldane himself probably did not believe that most of the Scots were disloyal.

Thus far in his speech, Haldane had kept strictly to the matter about which the meeting had been called. But he went further; he spoke against the "impolicy and unjustness of the war."[1] And this was followed by his description of a genuine democrat: He was a "friend of his country, and a lover of peace, and one who cherished the sentiments of general benevolence." Such a person he contrasted with those who were "desirous of hugging their prejudices, and of adapting the maxims of government of the seventeenth century to the end of the eighteenth century, a period so much more enlightened."[2] Continuing, he spoke of the evil consequencies of prejudices and of indiscriminate rejection and repression of everything new, irrespective of the beneficent effects which some of these things might have on society. He cited the Reformation as a new movement which had produced good effects. Then, without mentioning explicitly the French Revolution, he affirmed his confidence that the principles of freedom, now at work in the world, would prevail, to the blessing of mankind; and this, despite the "attempt to strangle these principles in their birth by the convulsed grasp of the expiring monster despotism."[3] He regarded the dreadful convulsions in Europe as the result of this struggle.

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1 Ibid, p. 8.
2 Loc. cit.
3 Ibid, p. 9.

Haldane concluded by declaring to the freeholders that instead of following the example of those radical societies whose attempts to arm themselves had been checked by the power of government, it would have been better had they been meeting to design how existing, acknowledged abuses could be reformed. There were other and better ways to influence their fellow-men than by arming themselves. He solemnly declared his belief in all the sentiments which he had expressed.

It is important, and must be kept in mind throughout this study of Haldane, that he never repudiated publicly (as did Chalmers) the views expressed in the above address.

The delivery of this address proved to be a momentous step for Haldane. We do not know for sure to what extent it affected the disaffected lower classes, but the effect on the upper and ruling classes was instant. Hereafter, Robert Haldane was a marked man; aristocratic friends and admirers--men of large influence--shunned him. This rejection was not without significance in Haldane's religious development. Since he kept himself aloof from the societies of The Friends of the People, he was now left to nurse his newly-aroused political and social concern in isolation from the two opposing camps into which Scotland was divided.[1] However,

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[1] "Every village," writes Dr. Meikle of this critical period, "was divided into rival camps of Government Men and Democrats" (op. cit., p. 116).

the clergymen who were resident in or near Stirling continued to visit him. They respected his sincerity, though they thought he held mistaken views on human nature and the prospects for society. Discussion with these Calvinistic clergymen was the catalytic agent which helped Haldane along to the second phase of the great crisis: the transition to a 'realistic' religious orientation.

Problems concerning Politics and Religion

Romantic expectations and Calvinistic realism. What was it, specifically, which roused Robert Haldane out of his aristocratic complacency? Again, there is no simple answer. A. Haldane merely says it was the excitement occasioned by the French Revolution.[1] This is not incorrect, but of course it is inadequate. Haldane knew better than most of his young contemporaries in Scotland the evils against which the French had revolted; and he had felt, largely through his travels, a great deal of the 'romantic impulse' of the time. It is not surprising, therefore, that he was in sympathy with the determination of the French people to be rid of their yoke of State-Church oppression. Coupled with this was a feeling of optimism, in regard to the French and to the world in general: "A scene of melioration and improvement . . . seemed to open itself to my mind, which I trusted would

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[1] Op. cit., p. 82.

speedily take place in the world."[1] He envisioned the abolition of slavery, of war, and of other evils, which seemed to him wholly to have resulted from "the false principles upon which the ancient governments had been constructed."[2] The French Revolution signified to Haldane the beginning of the end for outmoded, despotic governments--and with them, slavery and war--, and it was, indeed the 'dawn of liberty.' It was this prospect which drew his attention away from his worldly possessions, and made him a zealous defender of French principles and of the French experiment.

However, both Haldane and his biographer insist that his enthusiasm for the French Revolution did not, at any time, lead to disloyalty to his own system of government. "He appreciated ancient descent and old nobility," comments A. Haldane, "not as things possessing intrinsic value in themselves, but as links in the chain which help to secure stability to the State."[3] The cumulative evidence points to an inner tension between his democratic idealism on the one hand, and his patriotism and aristocratic interests on the other. This partly explains his conversion to Evangelicalism. The type of Evangelicalism which Haldane embraced can both encourage the will-to-freedom, and at the same

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1 Address, p. 4. 2 Loc. cit.
3 Op. cit., p. 82.

time (because of its pessimistic view of human nature, and its tendency to negate this-worldly values and to withdraw from ambiguous social conflict) strengthen conservative tendencies.

The great change from politics to religion took place either in late 1794 or in the early part of 1795. It is possible to trace, in broad outline, Haldane's conversion from a this-worldly, optimistic concern for the democratic, humanitarian movement, to an almost exclusively religious concern--or to a certain otherworldly, pietistic type of Protestant religious concern. At the heart of the change lies the question, what is the nature of man? is he essentially good? are the scourges of war, slavery, and the like, the by-products of bad institutions? and is the overthrow of a corrupt priesthood and a despotic monarchy in France (followed by a general attack on the remains of European feudalism) likely to lead to good, responsible government, and, eventually to a reign of peace and justice? These, together with the scriptural precept regarding the Christian's obedience to rulers, were the questions which Robert Haldane discussed with the Stirling clergymen who continued to visit him after he had made himself unpopular with his aristocratic friends.

Haldane rightly perceived the all-importance of the first of these questions. If the human race were totally depraved, as the Calvinists affirmed it was, then the efforts for

radical improvement of the human situation were founded on an illusion. Striving for unattainable goals, man is called away from more modest ones. But more important still was it to begin the work of reform where the real trouble lay; if the makers of the French Revolution were right in insisting that evil originated, and has been perpetuated, through bad institutions, then reformation must begin by pulling down these aged structures, and constructing new institutions based on more enlightened principles. Haldane took up this position,[1] as over against his clerical friends, who tried to convince him that the doctrine of total human depravity was clearly consistent with the facts of history. They were sure that his ardent and sincere expectations for the democratic experiment would be disappointed.

Eventually, Haldane was convinced that the clergymen were right. Writing in 1800, he marvels that he could have been so blind to the facts and the lessons of history:

> It was a very erroneous way of judging, to suppose that human government, the creature of man, should uniformly be bad, cruel, or very imperfect; although he who planned and conducted it was amiable, good by nature, and possessing a high degree of perfection. This radical mistake, however, lay at the foundation of my political system.[2]

On this presupposition, Haldane had erected his Utopia. He earnestly hoped that the French experiment would lead to a

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[1] See Address, pp. 94, ff. [2] Ibid, p. 95.

peaceable, as well as a just, settlement. And if it did so, then he felt sure other nations would follow the French lead. But as the Revolution moved from reform to aggressive militarism, and the ferment in Britain rose higher and higher, his original Utopia gradually collapsed. He saw the realism of the view which his clerical friends had been urging upon him; gradually, and reluctantly, he came to a similar conclusion about the nature of man and about government:

> My views of government, of course, became very different; and, instead of laying to its charge all the moral evils by which mankind is afflicted, I was taught to refer them primarily to a very different source, and to wonder rather that human affairs went on so smoothly and well, and that so much security and happiness were, upon the whole, enjoyed.[1]

This conversion was less intense, and much less compulsive, than the conversion of Chalmers. Furthermore, the change (as we shall see) was not so drastic as the above citation might imply. Haldane's optimism and his democratic tendencies were still noticed and commented upon, at least as late as September, 1796.

Religious realism and social policy. At this stage, Haldane experiences tension between his new revelation and the moral demands of his other, 'pre-Christian,' views. He assures the reader that he is not defending wrong conduct,

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[1] Ibid, p. 97.

either in governments or in individuals: "The moral depravity of man forms no excuse for his misconduct."[1] But this did not resolve the conflict. The illogicality of his reconstructed outlook troubled him less than the practical problem of adjusting himself to society. He could not help seeing that nothing affected man's life and behaviour so much as civil government; and that the influence was reciprocal. Also, in becoming a Christian he did not cease to be a citizen, with the responsibility of informing himself as to the maxims of good government, and of imparting this knowledge to others.

But then he was confronted with Paul's injunction[2] to be submissive in all things to rulers. He had resolved to submit to the precepts revealed in the Bible, and this admonition seemed unequivocally clear. However, Haldane must have remained in a state of tension for several years afterwards. "I was not sure," he writes, "if any one had a right to give up inculcating the best modes of political arrangement as a part of truth."[3] It was a sermon preached by an associate, Greville Ewing, in November, 1798, which helped to resolve the conscious conflict between the Christian duty to obey the clear teaching of scripture and the practices of the early Church, on the one hand, and his

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[1] Loc. cit.
[2] Romans, chap. 13, vss. 1-6.
[3] Address, p. 100.

social and political responsibility on the other. Ewing's sermon is a reflection of the religious state of mind in Scotland in 1798--among the Independent Evangelicals, as well as among other religious groups. Christian subjection to all rulers, said Ewing, should be "conscientious, unresisting, disinterested, respectful, practical, and pious."[1] Soon afterwards, Haldane adopted a similar position. It occurred to him that neither Christ nor the apostles, whose example Christians should imitate, had at all meddled in political affairs. This being so, why should he continue to vex himself about contemporary, secular affairs? This simple revelation (says Haldane) "entirely satisfied my mind" (italics not in the original).[2] Furthermore, it occurred to him why the early Christians had withdrawn from any active participation in the social and political struggle of their day. It was because

> . . . they could do much more good by calling men's attention to the concerns of a future world, to their own depravity, and to the gospel of salvation, than in being so much occupied with the arrangements of time.[3]

The apostles never directly attacked slavery and the other gross evils of their day; and yet the gospel which they preached did most to undermine these evil institutions and practices.

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[1] See Address, appendix. [2] Ibid, p. 100.
[3] Loc. cit.

Here the positive influence of the French Revolution appears to end--or at least Haldane seems to have made a clean break with it. The French Revolution had asserted the inalienable right of a people to resist and overthrow its governing powers and its institutions, when these powers and institutions become oppressive. This, as the Burke-Paine controversy emphasized, was what the French Revolution had come to symbolize in Britain. The right-to-rebel gave immense encouragement to the radical political societies; it struck fear into the minds of rulers and holders of property. And this right, Haldane disavowed for Christians, in favour of a quietistic, Stoic-Christian, resignation to the will of Providence.

But if this is repudiation of the French Revolution, it is different from that of Chalmers, whose principles were quite definitely not quietistic. Haldane rejects the principle of resistance, not primarily because he finds it disruptive and destructive of social and political order (though his doctrine of total depravity does lead him to this conclusion). Rather, the task of the Christian is not directly to reform social conditions, but, individually, to save men (or the elect) out of the world; to re-orient the mind, so that this-worldly concerns will not matter.[1]

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1 This blend of Christian faith and Stoicism was more or less dominant in western thought throughout the Christian era (and especially in the eighteenth century) until the time of the French Revolution.

This strong otherworldly emphasis results in a strategy of withdrawal. But did Haldane repudiate the principles which he had defended in his Stirling speech? It would be nearer the truth to say he abandoned the defence of them. When he requested permission to establish a mission to India, he assured the authorities, not that he had repudiated the French Revolution, but that as a missionary he would have nothing to do with political affairs. He destroyed his Stirling speech, together with a letter in which he expressed his "abhorrence of all secret cabals, or open violence against the government . . . [both] as treating of a subject which I have forever renounced."[1] (italics not in the original).

One feels that there was in Haldane a conflict between his original, aristocratic character structure and social position, and the challenge which he accepted during the French Revolution. Like Dr. Bogue, he was a friend of, and he was stirred by, the abstract appeal of the democratic movement. But in concrete situations, they both steadfastly refused to commit themselves to social and political action. This is not unrelated to the feeling of profound relief which Haldane experienced when he realized that Christ and the apostles had remained pacifist and passive in their day, and that that strategy had produced far-reaching and beneficent

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1 Address, pp. 6,7.

social effects.

His pacifism and his withdrawal from the world derived, then, from the doctrine of total depravity, a narrow biblicism, and the belief in the normativeness of the patterns set by the early Church. He could find no precedent in the Bible--Old or New Testament--for believers interfering "to alter the arrangements or constitutions of civil government. But there was also a more practical reason for his social and political quietism. During the period of reaction in Scotland, Haldane came to see the awful complexity and the ambiguity of the human situation. He (and here Haldane typifies the greater part of the Independent Scottish Evangelicals) had been much too simple in his early hopes for the French Revolution. He still believed in the revolutionary ideal of freedom. But the Revolution had activated a flood of highly-charged feelings, which he now saw could not be curbed by the dictates of prudence. Too, a change of government involved the use of force, and this usually led to violence and bloodshed. In such a conflict, Christians could have no part; indeed, they could not consistently enter into deliberations with men of this world in affairs in which evil was involved. The motives of pride, vain-glory, and profit, could not be countenanced by Christians, who are

> . . . pilgrims and strangers, mere passengers through this world. . . . Let, then, the men of this world, in matters of worldly ambition, contend, if they will, with

one another; Christians are pursuing higher objects.[1]

Later dissensions within his own ranks should have taught Haldane the folly of this pious but unrealistic sentimentalism.

If the framers and leaders of the French Revolution had erred in failing to see, or to admit, the morally ambiguous character of all human thought and action, and the profound complexity of civilized society, Haldane and the otherworldly Evangelicals went to the other extreme in trying to withdraw altogether from the world and make of themselves little islands of Christian perfection in a sea of sin. But it is likely that Haldane's desire to restore the patterns of primitive Christianity was unconsciously suggested by, or related to, the romantic-revolutionary urge to 'return to nature' (though, of course, there were

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[1] Address, p. 111. Haldane came to revere the Christian principles of John Newton, an Established minister in England. The Evangelicalism of the latter combined a kind of admiration for the French rebels, with an almost utter cynicism for domestic politics. In 1793, he wrote, "I suppose no human person was sorry when the Bastille was destroyed, and the pillars of their oppressive government shaken." He abhorred French atheism, but he regarded even the Jacobins as "saws and hammers in the hand of the Lord." In the same address, he declared that "the instruments whom the Lord employs in political matters are usually such as are incapable of better employment. . . . I have so poor an opinion of the bulk both of the electors and the elected, that I think, if the seats in the house of commons could be determined by a lottery, abundance of mischief and wickedness might be prevented . . . but these are not my concern." (See pamphlet, Political Debate on Christian Principles, pp. 6-10). Haldane was never so cynical, partly because of his non-conformism.

many voices within and outside the Church, long before Haldane, who urged a return to New Testament simplicity). At any rate, otherworldly piety served to break the tedious tension between the demands of radical freedom on the one hand, and the anti-revolutionary social pressure, the failures of the French experiment, and his own aristocratic frame of reference, on the other.

Missionary Activities and Opposition

The challenge of foreign missions. After settling the question of Man's nature, in the light of experience and the teachings of the Bible, Haldane found an outlet for his newly-activated energy and optimism in the missionary enterprise. Carey and the London Missionary Society had driven the entering wedge; India lay open to the Christian gospel.

We have seen how the impact of the French Revolution aroused Haldane from a life of ease and complacency, and we know that among his energetic, imaginative young contemporaries in Scotland there was a similar stirring. This enthusiastic, humanitarian response-to-challenge is carried over, in the case of Haldane, with hardly a break, into the cause of Christian missions. Wordsworth could find relief from his disappointment (after passing through despair) in nature-mysticism; Chalmers could fall back on mathematics. Haldane had not long to wait before New Testament Christianity

provided him with both the rationale for the failures of the French Revolution, and a constructive challenge for his enthusiasm:

> Christianity is everything or nothing. If it be true, it warrants and commands every sacrifice to promote its influence. If it be not [true], then let us lay aside the hypocrisy of professing to believe it.[1]

He had grasped at a 'shadow'; in so doing, he had caught the 'substance.' The challenge of the first seemed to be empty, after he had responded to the second, but it had been a forerunner, and so had fulfilled its part in the scheme of things.

The combined influence of the French Revolution and the nascent missionary movement in England was felt far and wide. "The reports of the Baptist Missionary Society," says Cunningham, "were everywhere read; and though many sneered at the fond enthusiasts and their utopian work, others saw in these things the spring of a better day."[2] These words describe something of the responsiveness which was manifested in Scotland for and against the bold experiment. Two missionary societies came into being, and the subject of foreign missions was brought into the General Assembly in 1796. The great majority of the ministers were against a proposal to assist missionary societies. Principal Hill thought the

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[1] A. Haldane, op. cit., p. 99.
[2] J. Cunningham, Church History of Scotland, vol. ii, p. 404.

intentions of the societies were good, but he feared lest their enthusiasm and the "common fund should be perverted from their original channel and be made the means . . . of stirring up temporal strife, instead of promoting spiritual peace."[1] Another objector was less sympathetic:

> The professed object of the present societies is good . . . all the other circumstances respecting them are bad, for I am free to assert . . . that all the societies which have of late years existed in this country, have been more or less connected with politics. . . . The associations of the people, formed . . . to petition for the abolition of the slave trade . . . did lay the foundation of the political societies which have since disturbed the peace and tranquillity of the country. Still, however, the people meet under the pretext of spreading abroad Christianity among the heathen. Observe, sir, they are affiliated, they have a common object, they correspond with each other, they look for assistance from foreign countries, in the very language of many of the seditious societies. Above all, it is to be marked they have a common fund. . . . Their funds may be, in time; nay, certainly will be, turned against the constitution.[2]

The proposal to assist foreign missions was rejected by the Assembly. This was not surprising: "The Assembly simply gave utterance to the almost universal sentiments of the time--the sentiments of good people in England as well as in Scotland . . . of Dissenters as well as Churchmen."[3]

Against this background, Haldane the Missionary appears. Inspired by the example of Carey and the reports

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1 See Proceedings and Debate in the General Assembly, 1796, pp. 50, ff.
2 Ibid, pp. 54, 55.
3 Cunningham, op. cit., pp. 405,6.

of early successes, he conceived the idea of selling his estate at Airthrey and using the fortune to establish a mission in Bengal. Dr. Bogue, Dr. Innes of Stirling, and Mr. Greville Ewing agreed to join him in the work. However the plan never materialized. The Board of Directors of the East India Company refused to grant them permission. Letters were written by Haldane, Wilberforce, and others, to Dundas, requesting him to use his influence for the scheme, but they were to no avail. Then, as a last, determined resort, letters were written to clergymen in the Church of Scotland, petitioning their support, but the response was too weak to affect the decision of the authorities. So, the mission to India was never begun. Haldane's political sentiments, which he had expressed earlier (and which he does not recant even in his letter to Dundas[1]), were sufficient excuse for the refusal.

In London, Wilberforce undertook to convince Dundas of Haldane's loyalty and sound intentions, but both Dundas and the missionaries disappointed him. With reference to Haldane and his associates, he wrote in his diary:

> I am sorry to find them all perfect democrats, believing that a new order of things is dawning [italics not in the original]. . . . Haldane very open. I told him I thought that he, by imprudence had injured the cause with Dundas.[2]

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1 See Appendix B.

2 R. J. and S. Wilberforce, Life of Wilberforce, vol. xiii, p.176; also A. Haldane, op. cit. pp. 111, 112.

The biographers of Wilberforce comment that "much as he [Wilberforce] disliked their views, and earnestly as he argued against their revolutionary principles [italics not in the original], in a long talk about government," he nevertheless regretted the decision of Dundas. He insisted to Dundas that on his own grounds it was wise to allow Haldane to go to India: "In Scotland such a man is sure to create a ferment. Send him, therefore, to the back settlements, to let off his pistol in vacuo" [italics not in the original].[1]

What actually transpired while Haldane and his associates were in London is not clear. The tone of Haldane's letter to Secretary Dundas is not that of a defeated and humiliated subordinate, pleading for a government indulgence. Rather, Haldane (though already refused once) states his case and affirms his right to establish a Christian Mission in India, as the English Baptists had already done. He wishes to create no disturbance, either at home or abroad. However, he warns that if he and his associates are refused the liberty to propagate the Christian religion, such a refusal would be attended with "disagreeable consequences" among the religious people of Great Britain. Furthermore, a"flat refusal" would not end the matter; he and his friends would

. . . bring it before the Public, and we have not a

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[1] Wilberforce, op. cit., p.177, A. Haldane vigorously contests the fairness of these statements (op. cit., p. 112).

> doubt, but we shall interest in our favour all the numerous friends of Religion, and of human happiness, of every denomination, and in every part of the Country.[1]

The lively concern, and "the numerous petitions with thousands of signatures" would convince the Government that they should comply with the request. However, he reiterated his desire "to go quietly and not have the Publick mind at all agitated by the business."[2]

There is every reason to believe that Haldane was quite sincere, but if Pitt regarded the scheme as "a well-meant Utopian ebullition of youthful zeal,"[3] Dundas could hardly have overlooked a certain similarity to the persistency and the democratic method of the Friends of the People in Scotland, who had tried to 'force' the hand of Parliament by public agitation. On the other hand, a letter from Wilberforce to Dundas, about the above-mentioned request, does not suggest that the former regarded Haldane as a "democrat," or as holding "revolutionary principles." On the contrary, he was sure his sentiments were blameless, and he pointed out that for nothing save his anti-war address at Stirling had Haldane ever been accused.[4] The discrepancy between this testimony and Wilberforce's private memoranda is probably explained by the shrewd diplomacy

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1 Appendix B.
2 Appendix B.
3 A. Haldane, op. cit,, p. 109.
4 Appendix B.

(in dealing with Pitt and Dundas) of which Wilberforce was capable, and his impatient detestation of all political nonconformism (in dealing with Haldane). His private generalizations about Haldane's views are too unqualified, and his official recommendation to Dundas is (in the light of his memoranda) deceptive. In any case, the evidence suggests that as late as September 1796, Haldane was still engrossed in the prospects of a new order for society. In 1796, this was hardly the attitude that was to be expected from a man of Haldane's standing, even if the means to obtaining a new order for society was Christian evangelization instead of political reform. Furthermore, he disliked religious establishments. In short, while he was not an active political democrat, he was not a warm, vocal defender of the British system of Government, and British institutions.

Missions in Scotland. Frustrated in this attempt to go to India, Haldane turned his attention to the possibilities of missionary work in Scotland. In 1796, James Haldane had made a tour with Simeon of Cambridge through the Highlands. Although they did not do intensive evangelistic work on this tour, they did distribute religious tracts, which some people mistook for the writings of Paine.[1] Later, James Haldane became a lay preacher who attracted large multitudes,

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[1] See Robert Philip's Life of Campbell, p.28.

especially in the north and west of Scotland, before becoming the pastor of the 'Circus' Church in Edinburgh. The Sunday Schools, against which much criticism was levelled, were organized by James Haldane and John Campbell, while Robert Haldane devoted the greater part of his fortune to Independent Evangelical mission work in Scotland. He bought the Edinburgh 'Circus,' and converted it into an Independent Tabernacle. Besides, he invested a large sum of money in a project, superintended by Mr.Ewing, for the training of young, Independent divinity students. Schisms within the movement lated sapped its strength, but with this we are not concerned here.

Much of the opposition to the work of the Haldanes was due to their own tactless and rather self-righteous attacks on ministers in the Established Church. James antagonized Church of Scotland ministers by accusing them publicly, before their parishioners, of heresy and unfaithfulness to their charge. He was joined in these attacks by the Englishman, Rowland Hill, who came to Scotland from a different communion. These attacks and exposures led to serious disaffection for pastors within some of the parishes. Also, many members ceased to attend their own churches (or attended irregularly), and ceased to support them, preferring the freer and more vital Tabernacle meetings. It is no doubt true that many of the Church leaders were provoked at the Independents, not so much because they suspected them of

stirring up fresh revolutionary discontent, but because the successes of the Haldanes glaringly exhibited the failures of the Church (under the leadership of the Moderates) to make itself accessible to the people.

Letters which were written to government officials in regard to Haldane, during the years 1797 and 1798, reveal something of the fear which motivated Church leaders and holders of large properties.[1] Haldane's courage and steadfastness, and the fact that he was something of a renegade (and a successful one) from both the Church and the aristocracy, must have aggravated the fears and hostility of the vested interests of the country.

Not long after Haldane's unsuccessful attempt to go to India, there appeared in print Prof. John Robison's Proofs of a Conspiracy, in which an eminent person (obviously Haldane) was singled out as a friend and an abettor of Dr. Priestley, and one who "would willingly wade to the knees in blood to overturn the establishment of the Kirk of Scotland."[2] The charge was founded on hearsay only, and seems to have had no basis in fact (the author later confessed he had been mistaken), but the Anti-Jacobin Review[3] sought further to cast aspersions on Haldane's motives by reminding the public that the French philosophes were apparently non-violent

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1 See in Appendix the letters of Dr. Porteous; also the Duke of Atholl's letter in Edin. Univ. Laing MSS., no. 500.

2 p. 485

3 May 1799, iii, pp. 341-5.

when they began to promulgate the ideas which launched the Revolution.

Further attacks came from different quarters. In January, 1797, the Rev. Dr. W. Porteous wrote to the Lord Advocate to assure him that the "missionary madness" which was then developing in Scotland, and of which Robert Haldane was becoming the foremost figure, was dangerous to peace and order in Scotland. "Many of us," he wrote, "have reason to believe that the whole of this missionary business grows from a democratical root."[1] He was convinced that a subtle political purpose was couched behind the religious front. This feeling was shared by Principal Hill.[2] In the following year, Dr. Porteous wrote again to Dundas, informing him of the activities and successes of the Haldanes. The Sunday Schools which James Haldane had organized in various parts of the country were scenes of "vehement praying and preaching," and they were attended by multitudes. He thought that, though politics were not directly mentioned in the meetings, nor religious establishments directly attacked, the gatherings were calculated to produce discontent with the existing order.[3]

Intensified opposition. An undated letter from the Duke of Atholl to the Duke of Portland betrays even more

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1 Appendix B.
2 See Edinburgh University Laing MSS, No. 501.
3 See Appendix B.

animated fear and hostility for the work and the person of Robert Haldane. "No man," charges the Duke, "was more violent while he dared [italics in original] than Mr. Haldane." Under a religious cover (he affirmed), Haldane was setting about with his "apostles" to indoctrinate the youth of Scotland with rebellious intents. The writer appeals for

> . . . prompt and energetic measures to annihilate the further progress of unlicensed missionaries and free schools, whether under the auspices of Mr. Haldane or any other enthusiastic or designing man whatever.[1]

A bill to this effect was, in fact, drawn up by Pitt, but it was never presented. However, the threat was sufficient to draw from Haldane his Address to the Public. He was prepared to furnish a sequel, and answer the charge that he was seeking the overthrow of the religious establishment. But the Address, together with the efforts of Wilberforce and others, proved sufficient to disarm the fears of the public.

Before Haldane's Address appeared, the General Assembly of 1799 took measures to defend the Church against the inroads of the Independents. First, it restricted the livings of the Established Church to the licentiates of the Church of Scotland. In the second place, it made it inadmissable for ministers in the Church of Scotland to

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[1] Edinburgh University Laing MSS., no. 500. This letter is undated.

employ ministers outside that Church to preach, upon any occasion, or to dispense the ordinances. Ministers were also prohibited from "holding ministerial communion in any other manner with such persons."[1] With regard to "vagrant teachers," and Sunday Schools, the Assembly was reminded of the various acts of the Scottish Parliament for the clerical censoring of education. Presbyteries were therefore urged to keep a check on all teachers. The concurrence of the Lord Advocate and the Solicitor-General in enforcing this jurisdiction was asked. The Assembly further drew up a "Pastoral Admonition," which was to be read from every Church of Scotland pulpit in the land. It was directed, particularly, against the Haldanes and their associates, charging them explicitly, or by implication, with undermining the foundations of established institutions.

Was the new lay movement a threat to religious establishments, and a possible menace to social and political order? Dr. Porteous and others, within and without ecclesiastical circles, who disliked the Haldanes personally, were wrong in attributing to them sinister designs against the Government and against the Established Church. The Haldanes cannot justly be accused of deliberate, subversive activity or intentions. On the other hand, Robert Haldane had no sympathy for the foundation or the superstructure of religious

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[1] See Acts of Assembly, 1799, pp. 870-75.

establishment. He had been an ardent believer in the French Revolution, and while he had agreed to keep silent on political affairs, if allowed to go to India, he had not publicly denounced his democratic sentiments. This, together with the tactless attacks of J. Haldane and Rowland Hill, must have created genuine concern in the minds of Church leaders and Secretary Dundas. The Sunday Schools, and the Independent societies which were organized to consolidate Independent Evangelical activity, were further causes of suspicion and anxiety. The missionaries adopted (probably quite unwittingly, for the most part) methods which looked more like those of the revolutionary societies than anything which had ever been tried in the Church of Scotland: They circulated tracts, especially among the excitable Highlanders; they corresponded with other like-minded societies; their meetings, while not directly political in nature, were carried out along democratic lines, and were probably misused at times by suspicious and uneducated persons. Such practices, under the sponsorship of Haldane, and coming at a time when almost the whole of Scotland was seething with unrest, could not but raise an alarm. [1]

Summary and Conclusion

Christian obedience to civil authority. In his writings,

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[1] "It was with a sure instinct," writes Hume Brown, "that the Moderate leaders persistently associated the work of the two brothers with the ferment in France" (op. cit., vol. iii, pp. 392,3).

Haldane sets forth his views on the relation of Church to State.[1] Church and State are two distinct realms. Civil government is concerned only with affairs relating to this life, and so long as it keeps within these confines its authority is supreme. Informed by his belief in man's total depravity (and, probably, by the conservatism of Burke, though he never mentions Burke), he affirms that all structures of authority--the family, government, laws of society--are given in the mercy of God, to protect man against himself. The scriptures prescribe no particular mode of government; every form is to be obeyed with full conscientiousness. He will not allow the objection that the scriptural command to obey civil rulers applies only to good rulers, and good governments. For Christians, the command is equally binding in every age, and irrespective of whether the particular government under which a Christian happens to live is good or bad. An evil government is better than a reign of anarchy; hence it is an act of great mercy in God to have ordained even the very worst form of rule. Furthermore, a Christian would (or should) not merely tolerate a bad government as a necessary evil; rather, since it is ordained by God, it is to be positively and gladly obeyed,"so long as it does not command what God forbids."[2]

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[1] See his Answer to Ewing, pp. 221 ff; Address pp. 103 ff.

[2] Robert Haldane, Commentary on Romans, vol. iii, pl 146.

But this unqualified conformism is not the political conservatism of Burke, and its spirit is not the militant nationalism which inspired Chalmers. It is much more naïve and disinterested. In Britain, it yielded to Toryism, but, presumably, in France the same attitude would prompt Evangelicals to submit to Napoleon, once he had established himself in power.[1] Haldane makes the distinction between approbation and submission, as regards politics: Christians must submit to all governments but not approve of any.[2] This is an attempt to regain a prophetic balance, but it does little to alter the indifferentism which such a system (or lack of a system) encourages. A Stoical doctrine of Providence, a biblical literalism, and (in Haldane's case) an aristocratic bias, have together undercut concrete social action or prophetic criticism.

But while the civil authorities are supreme in their own realm, they have no special authority in the Church:

> In the Church of Christ, the civil magistrate, as such [italics in the original], can never, according to scripture, under the New Testament dispensation, have any place. When he enters there, he must come, not as a magistrate, but as any other disciple . . . He must assume no pre-eminence or authority, from his official civil situation, over others, even the meanest slave upon earth.[3]

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[1] Here, Haldane was much closer to Luther than to Calvin (see E. Troeltsch, The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches, vol. ii, pp. 557 ff), but of course he belongs to the smaller, pacifist sects.

[2] Cf. Haldane's Romans, vol. iii, pp. 145 ff.

[3] Address, p. 132.

This was virtually Chalmers's position during the Non-Intrusion controversy. But the two men differed widely in their views on Church polity. Haldane would never allow any sort of hierarchy within the Church (or 'churches,' to be more exact). He would allow functional distinctions, but otherwise he placed all believers on the same level. In defending his Tabernacle scheme, he charges the leaders of the Church of Scotland with depriving the poor of an equal share in Christian worship, through the system of pew-renting; the system, together with the distinctions created thereby, should be abolished in Sabbath services. Towards the end of his life, when Haldane became more obsessed with Calvinistic orthodoxy, this socio-religious concern for justice diminished.

Haldane adopted Independent views of church government, partly because of Bogue's influence and the Dissenting tradition. He was also indirectly influenced by the revolutionary events which were taking place in France. According to John Campbell, a close associate of the Haldanes, the latter began seriously to entertain the idea of establishing Independent churches of their own only after Independent ministers from England had visited them in 1798, and expounded their conception of the nature of the Church.[1] This, says Campbell, set off the alarm made by the ministers and churches of all denominations, "that the object of all our exertions was the

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[1] See R. Philip's Life of Campbell, p. 28.

overturn of the Establishment; to which was soon added the overturn of the British Constitution."[1] So, while there was in the minds of the alarmists a definite connection between revolutionary political agitation and Haldane's dislike for religious establishments, there appears, in fact, to have been no such direct connection between the setting up of the Independent Scottish churches and the French Revolution. The fact that Robert Haldane was attempting something which was new and odd in Scotland during this storm-and-stress period was enough to make the whole movement suspect.

The successes of the Haldanes. The Haldane movement achieved its rise in Scotland in the midst of the revolution-and-reaction ferment. The French Revolution had stirred the dormant Churches to life. With some, this revival at first took the form of apocalyptic optimism, but the larger part of the religious community soon became afraid for its life. A revival of Evangelical religion followed. "Scotland," says Struther, "caught the religious ardour, and burst forth into a blaze."[2] A spirit of unanimity pervaded the Evangelical groups; societies sprang into being; Evangelical churches were filled for prayer meetings, and interest in the cause of Christian missions was considerable.[3]

The interesting thing to note here is that in Scot-

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[1] Loc. cit.
[2] Op. cit., p. 393.
[3] Loc. cit.

land, the rise of popular interest in missions synchronized with the decline of the radical political societies. This seems especially significant when one recalls that political radicalism in Scotland did not decline naturally, but was suppressed while in robust youth by force. Haldane's awakening and later religious conversion were representative of a larger, collective transformation. To a large extent, the arduous hopes and enthusiasm, which had been activated or strengthened by the French Revolution, became canalized into religious channels. This largely accounts for the reception which the Haldanes received.

Chapter V

NEIL DOUGLAS: PROPHETIC HOPE AND SOCIAL ACTION

The life and writings of Neil Douglas furnish an insight into another aspect of Scottish religious life and thought during the French revolutionary period.

The two foregoing studies and the study which follows proceed in an ascending order--from the youngest to the oldest, and from the individual who was (or who appears to have been) least affected by the Revolution, to the individual who was most affected. However, in one respect the order is reversed: In order of importance, posterity has placed Chalmers in the foremost position, Haldane second, while Neil Douglas has been a prophet without honour, left to sink deeper and deeper into obscurity. The justness of this implied verdict is open to question, but in any case some critical appraisal of Douglas's place in and contribution to the political, social, and spiritual life of his time is overdue. A critical inquiry into his life and work may show that it is sometimes the 'minor' prophets who have played the really difficult and unpopular rôles in the critical, decisive eras of a nation's life, and in the life of the Church. As preacher and reformer, this 'minor' prophet was inextricably linked to the great Revolution of his time.

Early Life and Ministry in the Relief Church

Early life. Neil Douglas was born in Glendarvel, Argyleshire, in the year 1750. His father, Daniel Douglas, was a farmer and a miller, and his ancestors for several generations back had been more fortunate financially than the average. His mother's family name was MacKinlay. She was "grand daughter or great grand daughter to one of the Northern Dukes of a former time; but (she) was disowned in consequence of her marrying Daniel Douglas."[1]

The early death of his father, while Neil and his one sister were still in early childhood, brought the mother and two children into financial difficulty. They were forced to move to Greenock in order to obtain help from relatives of Mr. Douglas. Neil was at this time "scarce nine years of age, and could not speak a word of English." Many years later he declared that this move was for him "the most favourable in his checkered lot,"[2] because it allowed him to learn something of the shoemaker's trade, and to achieve for his mother and himself a less dependent status. After some years the family removed to Glasgow to enable young Neil to acquire a better knowledge of his trade, and in order that he might "have more favourable opportunities for

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[1] See the short biographical account of Douglas by Fraser in The Universalist, vol. ii, p. 347 et sqq.

[2] N. Douglas, Journal of a Mission to the Highlands, p. 132. Of course, he spoke Gaelic.

gratifying that thirst for knowledge which was early awakened in his young, ardent bosom."[1] Here Douglas carried on his trade, supporting his mother and sister; while his leisure time was devoted to books and to preparation for entering the university. At this early stage it appears that he, like Chalmers and Haldane after him, looked forward to becoming a minister of religion.

At the unusually mature age of twenty-two, Douglas entered Glasgow University (in 1772) where he was a student for the following eight years. During this period he continued to support himself and his dependents, but now by tutoring, publicly and privately. The strain must have been too much; we learn from Struthers that his mind gave way while he was a student.[2] However, Douglas pursued his university studies with more than the usual success. He was not a profound thinker, but he possessed a keen mind which rapidly improved itself.

His first charge. As soon as he decided upon the Church as a profession, he was assured by some of his student friends and distant relations who had connections with the Nobility that "the patronage of the best parishes of Scotland would be at his command."[3] However, during the

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1 Fraser, op. cit., 347.
2 See Struthers, History of the Relief Church, Appendix x.
3 Fraser, op. cit., p. 347. Douglas was at this time a licentiate of the Church of Scotland.

course of his university studies and independent reading, he came to adopt views unfavourable to the principle of religious establishment; and he imbibed liberal political views.[1] As a result, he disappointed the expectations of his associates by refusing the hand of patronage and by becoming a licensed probationer in the Relief Synod. Shortly afterwards, he obtained a call from the Relief church at Cupar-Fife, which he accepted. The date of this call and the duration of his residence in Cupar are not clear,[2] but here in his first charge Douglas seems to have earned some eminence as a preacher and as a member of the Synod.[3]

While in Cupar, he was married to Mary Ann Miller, a first cousin of Henry Dundas (afterwards Lord Melville).[4] This connection with Dundas was useful to Douglas later, when his political activities involved him in difficulties with the authorities.

Sermons and essays before 1790. In late August, 1789, Douglas published his first book--a collection of sermons, together with some essays in poetry. In 1790, he followed this

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1 Loc. cit.

2 Dr. McKelvie, in his Annals and Statistics of the United Presbyterian Church (p. 135), says the duration was thirteen years; according to Small (History of the United Presbyterian Congregations, vol. i, p. 296) it was only six years. The correct figure is probably nearer six years.

3 "He became extremely popular and speedily became the leading member of the Relief Synod," says Fraser (op. cit., p. 348). Synodical records hardly show this, but they do indicate that Douglas was respected and liked by his associates.

4 Fraser, loc. cit.; also, N. Douglas, Strictures on the Author's Trial, p. 74.

with A Few Essays in Poetry, Published for the Benefit of a Poor Family.[1] In the first-named work, there is no mention of the commencement of the French Revolution. If the storming of the Bastille had, up to this time, aroused any keen feeling in Douglas, he does not disclose it.

The sermons, on the whole, are taken up with the frailty and insecurity of Man in this life; the heavenly consolation of believers, and the all-importance of being prepared for eternity. This is rather different from the otherworldliness of Haldane. In these sermons of Douglas, the eternal realm impinges more on the present order; the insignificance and transitoriness of all men, great and small, implies a criticism of the rich and powerful who forget their ultimate weakness. But at this stage, Douglas is informed by an Evangelicalism which, in the final analysis, is ethically quietistic. Discourse III shows a latent discontent, a prophetic uneasiness, in the face of the social and economic inequalities and the Tory complacency of eighteenth century Britain. But this discontent is vented in 'spiritual' warnings to the rich and powerful about death, "that awful and all-levelling event."[2] Such preaching did, as we have seen, have revolutionary consequences, but this was not intended. In the essays in poetry, Douglas shows

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1 Appears not to be extant.

2 Sermons (published in 1789; not 1788, as in Small, op. cit., vol. i, p. 181), p. 73

himself to be a loyal patriot, unequivocally devoted to King and country. He accepts, too (though not complacently), the existing social order: "God . . . hath appointed among men such diversity of rank, and inequality of condition for reasons no less beneficent to society, than wise in themselves."[1]

This is the kind of preaching that one would expect to find in an age which was still dominated by the belief that this is the best of all possible worlds. Also, in Scotland the political awakening was still to come; disfranchised burgesses, supported by other intellectuals, had initiated a move for reform of the 'rotten boroughs'. But the greater part of the Scottish clergy were unresponsive even to these attempts at mild reform. Douglas, however, was by no means insensible to the abuses of rank and position. He allowed diversity of rank and condition, "as it answers important purposes to the community at large; and so seems to be agreeable to the will of God, and necessary to the ends of his present administration."[2] But this was the result of man's having become depraved and having learned "through a fatal perversion of the native dictates of the human heart, to affix the ideas of honour and greatness to adventitious circumstances, independent of intrinsic worth."[3] But

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[1] Ibid, p. 76. [2] Ibid, p 174.
[3] Ibid, p. 175. It seems almost certain that Douglas was strongly influenced by Milton's doctrine of the Fall.

originally, rank and titles were the badge of merit. As necessary as it may be (for the sake of social order) to maintain existing social distinctions, not a few have come to possess dignified titles, "while in the eye of reason they may be the ignoble of the earth, the very refuse of mankind."[1]

This much, then, we know of Douglas on the eve of, and just after, the commencement of the Revolution in France. He had imbibed liberal principles during the eight years in which he was a student at Glasgow;[2] he was dissatisfied with the abuses of the hierarchical order in British society, though he thought this hierarchy was necessary; and he disliked religious establishments.

Residence in Dundee (1793-8). Douglas removed from Cupar early in 1793 to Dundee. Before leaving, he attempted to initiate in the Cupar church a change in the customary, infrequent observance of communion, in order to conform more nearly to the New Testament. He proposed, also, to dispense with the week-day services. He insisted (like the burgh reformers) that he was not proposing innovations, but was instead going back to the original, authoritative pattern.

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[1] Loc. cit. Douglas is here not directly attacking social abuses, but rather emphasizing, by analogy, the honour due to Christians.

[2] There is no mention of any particular professor. The inference is that his liberal tendencies derived mainly from his extensive reading--particularly the works of Milton on liberty.

Nevertheless, he failed to convince his elders, none of whom followed him.[1] This difficulty was further complicated by the inability, or unwillingness, of the church to fulfil a part of its financial commitment to Douglas. When a call came to him from another church, he did not press his financial claim.

Douglas was pastor of the West Port church (Relief) in Dundee from January, 1793, until November, 1798. For some time after his going to Dundee his popularity appears to have increased. In 1793 he was chosen as Moderator of the Relief Synod.[2] "He was much esteemed," writes Struthers, "as a man of genius and philanthropy."[3] Small quotes Dr. Wardlaw as saying(of Douglas), "He lost his popularity by preaching democratic politics."[4] Whether this was actually the case or not, Douglas was most certainly more outspoken than when he published his first volume of sermons in 1789.

Despite the good beginning, Douglas's work in the church at Dundee ended disappointingly. There was another dispute about a rather large sum of money which Mrs. Douglas had advanced to the church to pay off a debt incurred in erecting the new building. According to Fraser, none of the money was ever repaid. But there were other reasons for

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1 See Small, op. cit., p. 182.
2 McKelvie (op. cit., p.135) says he was Moderator in 1794. Synodical records show he became Moderator in May,1793.
3 Struthers, op. cit., appendix, p. 573.
4 Small, op. cit., p. 296. Dr. Wardlaw was a strong Tory.

the church's deterioration. In 1796, in the midst of his dispute with the elders and the presbytery, Douglas took leave of absence from the church in order to do missionary work in Argyleshire. While away in the Highlands, he came under suspicion in a seditious affair. He had carried a manuscript to a printer in Edinburgh just before leaving for Argyleshire. Later the manuscript was seized and the author was arraigned and sentenced to Botany Bay. However, there was some doubt if the real author had been apprehended:

> On the day of his trial, the Lord Advocate made free to say that the real author kept behind the curtain, and mentioned his suspicion that the tract must have been composed by [the Rev. Mr. Douglas], mentioning his name, profession, and place of abode.[1]

Douglas, when he returned to Edinburgh, insisted that he was not the author of the tract; that he had merely been the bearer of it, and that he knew nothing of the contents. However, he had arranged for the printing; furthermore, his name had by this time become associated with the cause of radical reform.[2] The real facts of this most unfortunate incident we do not know with certainty. Douglas's account might well have been true, but the authorities in Edinburgh were not easily convinced by one who had declared himself a friend of reform. Likewise, he lost the respect of some

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[1] Douglas, Strictures on the Author's Trial, pp. 70, 71; see also Struthers, op. cit., p. 400. The tract was entitled, The Moral and Political Catechism of Man, by George Mealmaker.

[2] He was, as we shall see, an active reformer in 1793.

who might otherwise have congratulated him on the success of the mission in the Highlands. When he returned to Dundee a deep shadow rested upon him and upon the mission which he had helped to begin.

Douglas attempted to repair the damage done to his pastoral work. He tried again to discontinue the week-day services and to have more frequent communions, but without success. It appears, too, that there were complaints, which never reached the Synod, that Douglas was preaching "in a somewhat offensive form the doctrine of universal redemption."[1] Discouragements accumulated. While he was away in Argyleshire, his wife and mother had been distressed by the civil authorities because of some taxes which he had failed to pay at the proper time.[2] After his return to Dundee, reports were circulated that he was to be seized and tried for sedition.[3] Under such circumstances it was thought unwise to remain in Dundee, and he resigned the charge in 1798. In his Strictures (written in 1817) he states that he could not in honour retain the church, because the members had determined to leave the Relief body and become Independents. Fraser's explanation is that he left because neither the

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1 Struthers, op. cit., p. 573; see also Douglas's Antidote against Deism, pp. 2-5.

2 The real cause was probably dislike for Douglas's political sentiments.

3 See Struthers, loc. cit.; see also Strictures on the Author's Trial, p. 79, where Douglas describes his and his family's anxiety because of the reports.

church nor the Synod would help him financially.[1] These were really symptoms of a deeper cause. The failure was due, in part, to a neglect of the parish in favour of the mission (though a part-time substitute for Douglas was provided by the Synod). But more important still was Douglas's involvement in the agitation for reform. He, and his work with him, were caught in the vortex of reaction which swept the country from 1797 to the end of the century.

One further observation should be made in connection with the residence in Dundee. Douglas, for several months, divided his time and energy again (without remuneration) in order to conduct services for a Scottish battalion of soldiers who were billeted nearby. He cites this as evidence of his good faith and loyalty to the country. As further evidence, he calls attention to some tracts which he wrote "to strengthen the hands of Government."[2] The tracts probably were intended to do no more than restrain the people from unlawful, reckless conduct, which would weaken the cause of reform. Neither in the tracts nor in his ministrations to the soldiers did Douglas intend to sanction the Government's war policy.

Leaving Dundee, Douglas moved his family to Edinburgh where he worked for a time in a printing press and

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1 Op. cit., p. 349. Synodical minutes (1797) show that the Synod moved that a collection be taken in the Relief churches and sent to Douglas.

2 See Strictures, p. 74. None of these tracts have survived.

preached gratis on Sundays. However, he was soon accused of transgressing a law of the Relief Synod by preaching in non-Relief churches. When he disregarded an admonition not to repeat this, he was excluded from the Synod.[1]

The Relief Church and the French Revolution. We have seen that the French Revolution rallied the ministers in the Church of Scotland round Throne and Altar. It brought about the quick decline of Moderatism and the rise of neo-orthodox Evangelicalism. The Relief Church was no less responsive, but, as Struthers points out, the response was rather different:

> It was welcomed among them with gladness. Like the dissenters in England, they rejoiced that thirty millions of people, indignant and resolute, were spurning slavery, demanding liberty, and that 'a general amendment was beginning in human affairs. The dominion of kings changed for the dominion of laws, and the dominion of priests giving way to the dominion of reason and conscience.'[2]

Among the achievements of the new (1795) Assembly in France, were the proclamation of full religious liberty, and the virtual overthrow of the power of the Roman Church. Enthusiastic hope was stirred to life throughout the Relief body. The events in France were seized upon by the students of prophecy: The tenth part of the city of mystical Babylon

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[1] Small, op. cit., pp. 296,7.
[2] Struthers, op. cit., p. 381. Struthers quotes from Price's Discourse on the Love of Our Country, p. 41.

was falling; the beginning of the end had come for 'Popery.' These were regarded as necessary steps towards the setting up of the millennial reign of Christ on earth. "It is observable," Struthers remarks, "that the tone of the Relief publications at this period was very different from those of the Established ministers. So far from being filled with fear, they were full of hope."[1] Religious establishments were now openly condemned and the Revolution in France praised by some of the Relief ministers, as late as 1795-6.

However, these rebellious manifestations were sporadic, even among Relief ministers. On the whole, they were not tempted to disloyalty to Britain. Many of them expected that the rising liberty of France would spread and would affect Britain, and they wished to see in Britain a reformation, in keeping with the glorious Revolution of 1688. But the majority stressed the need for 'moral reform,' which would dissolve political ferment and restore social tranquillity. After 1797 the Relief ministers were caught up, with the rest of the clergy, in the anti-revolutionary reaction.

This was the ecclesiastical milieu in which Douglas moved during the heated years of revolution and reaction. This is the conditioning background against which his activities as a reformer, and the sentiments expressed in

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[1] Ibid, p. 382.

his writings, must be seen. If he helped to restrain many of the reformers from excesses, he was himself restrained by his Relief associates.

Revolution and Reform

Douglas and the French Revolution. The Revolution in France was a great driving force in Douglas's life from about 1791 to the end of the century; it was also the catalyst which activated other forces.

The fall of the Bastille and the consequent successes of the French reformers meant to Douglas, in essence, what they did to the young Romantic poets, and to the great majority of Dissenters, in England and Scotland. They all hailed the Revolution as the beginning of the end for the age-old tyrannical oppression of mankind. It is this intense humanitarianism and scorn of injustice, oppression, and cruelty, in every form (to animals and to humans), which stand out in Douglas's writings after 1792. There are touches of it in the earlier sermons, but the real scorn of the prophet was then latent, awaiting the 'fulness of the time.' It had come to life in 1792, when he wrote his pamphlet on the slave trade, and his Monitory Address to Great Britain.

The Revolution in France was the signal for the pulling down of evil institutions and the preparing of the way for the deliverance of the captives of oppression. Its

message was one of hope and of judgment,[1] and was especially searching for the British Nation. Blessed above her neighbours, because of the glorious Revolution of 1688 which brought to her shores liberty, Britain had wasted her substance in riotous luxurious living; she had nearly forfeited her liberties by the greed, pride, and stubbornness of her leaders.[2] In the face of this, and of recent events in France, Douglas felt the prophetic urge to warn his countrymen. It was his patriotic as well as prophetic duty

> "To probe the fest'ring wound with friendly hand,
> And thus ward off destruction from our land."[3]

It is quite clear that he was sincere. While he would have disagreed sharply with Burke's views on the French Revolution, his attack on the sins of the British Nation was not, like that of Paine, an attack on the structure of British Government.[4] He was inspired by abstract principles of freedom and justice, by which he had first been aroused during the American War of Independence[5] (during which he supported

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1 Douglas several times compared himself to the Prophet Jeremiah. There were, in fact, similarities. The Assyrian threat had for Jeremiah something of the same meaning as the French Revolution had for Douglas. Both meant divine judgment. At the same time, the positive, optimistic note in Douglas's writings in 1792 was rather more like that of Second Isaiah (see Chap. 40), who hailed the coming of Cyrus as Jehovah's deliverance for the Jews.

2 See Monitory Address to Great Britain, passim.

3 Ibid., p. 4.

4 He wrote as though he were unaware of the Burke-Paine debate; his writings contain no mention of this controversy.

5 See Strictures, p. 66. The Government's attempt to bind the colonists, without allowing them representation, first opened his eyes.

the Whigs and the colonists). But his chief concern was to reform particular institutions and practices which could claim no justification in theory or in practice--chief among these was slavery. His political sympathies were with the Whigs, but this was mainly because of Tory reaction and inflexibility; in 1792 he was no strict party supporter, and no advocate of doctrinaire politics.

After August 10, 1792, he saw Britain and France going in opposite directions, and both to dangerous extremes. The British legislature, in denying moderate, humanitarian reforms, were stubbornly rejecting

> "Each mean that might reform;
> While rank is levell'd in a neighb'ring land,
> By erring policy's reforming hand."[1]

In principle, the French were right in abolishing all social distinctions deriving from adventitious circumstances, but the precipitous leap did not seem to Douglas a sound policy, "especially at a time which called for conciliatory measures; and when it was dangerous to exasperate those who formerly possessed so much power, wealth, and influence in the State."[2]

But time would tell whether the French had acted wisely or not. At any rate, the "grand objects" of the Revolution were not (and could not be) seriously affected, because they rested on "a broader basis."[3] The consequences of the

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1 Douglas, Monitory Address to Great Britain, p. 14.
2 Ibid, p. 15. 3 Loc. cit. (note)

Revolution up to that date had been such "as must impart joy to every humane and benevolent heart; and which is likely to be still more so."[1] There had been "tragical disasters," but these formed no argument against the Revolution, and time and experience would correct its defects. Unfriendly critics were

> . . . worse than blind who see not the hand of Providence therein; and that same Providence, which hath so visibly affected it will, it is hoped, continue to watch over and defend it, in spite of all opposition; which must form the ardent wish of every lover of humanity; of every citizen of the world.[2]

He further lauds the liberal and philanthropic principles of "that venerable body of men" who had in France achieved religious toleration; no longer were good men barred from offices there (as they were in Britain) by "invidious restrictions of Test laws."[3] This achievement was a direct rebuke to British legislators; but they had stubbornly resisted it. Instead of granting well-earned religious liberty to the religious Dissenters, the Government had passed by these loyal citizens and had granted concessions to intolerant Roman Catholics. Here Douglas fails to rise above his Puritan prejudices against Roman Catholicism:

> What strange events take place in the world [he complains]! Who could have divined that in the year

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1 Ibid, p. 14. 2 Ibid, pp. 14, 15.
3 Ibid, p. 15.

> --91 the legislature of Great Britain would have been occupied in granting toleration and indulgence to the Romish Church, at the precise moment that his Holiness the Pope was burnt in effigy in Paris![1]

Douglas reflects, more than either Chalmers or Haldane, the exultation of the Scottish clergy in the downfall of the Roman Church in France. This feeling was more general and more intense in Scotland than it was in England, principally because Scottish ecclesiastical history from the Reformation onward had been different.

Douglas, then, rejoiced in the successes of the revolutionists, though he felt they had acted hastily and rashly in attempting suddenly to level all ranks. He felt that religious and civil liberties were solid achievements in France (though time and experience would need to correct some abuses), and that these fruits would eventually be shared by other nations.[2] The maxim that Kings rule by divine right was now once and for all exploded, and the rights of the people were being reaffirmed. But what the French had (in desperation) effected by violence, Britain had achieved by more peaceable means, a hundred years earlier. She needed no new Revolution and no new Constitution. She required only to possess the fruits of the one she had and to improve upon it--since no human production was perfect: "To profit, in this respect, by the wisdom and example of

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[1] Loc. cit..

[2] Ibid, p. 14.

our neighbours, is not unbecoming the wisest and the greatest."[1]

But Britain was not realizing the fruits of her glorious Revolution; her people were not actually enjoying full civil and religious liberty. They could not do so, while certain institutions and practices were allowed to persist with the sanction of the British Government. Church patronage and the slave trade were the most outstanding grievances.

Beginnings of an active reformer. Douglas inscribed his Monitory Address to the King, and in so doing he implored His Majesty to restore the right of choosing their pastors to the Christian people themselves, "in whom it was originally vested."[2] He gratefully acknowledged that there was less reason to complain than there had been earlier; dissatisfied parishioners could withdraw and join themselves to an Independent body. But this had the effect of reducing charges to mere sinecures. The system was wasteful and unsatisfactory to all concerned, and its recall would be attended by the success of religion and the prosperity of the State.[3]

The other evils to which Douglas calls attention in his inscription are, the slave trade, duelling, and the general moral degeneracy of the time.

The anti-slavery movement in Britain was begun in

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[1] Ibid, p. 186. [2] Ibid, ix.
[3] Ibid, xi.

Parliament by Wilberforce in 1787, and in the following year the Relief Synod began to move as a body for the abolition of this evil. Messages were sent to the Associate Burgher and Anti-Burgher Synods asking for their concurrent support. The overture was accepted, and these bodies publicly declared themselves in favour of abolition.[1] Their defeat in Parliament only increased the zealous activities of the friends of abolition. The evidence which had been presented before the House of Commons was printed and circulated throughout the country; "Every minister," says Struthers, "established and dissenting, in Scotland, got a copy sent him along with an accompanying letter."[2]

Douglas, then minister at Cupar-Fife, figured prominently in this effort. In keeping with the liberal spirit of the Relief Church and its declared attitude towards the slave trade, he marshalled the evidence against slavery and elaborated it into a two hundred page pamphlet which he printed and presented to the public in the early part of 1792, while his Monitory Address was in the hands of the publisher. This anti-slavery pamphlet--The African Slave Trade--is the most eloquently written and prophetic of all the works of Douglas which have survived. The tone is impassioned; the writer is obviously deeply moved and determined. Buthe also seems to be fully aware of the danger and futility

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[1] Struthers, op. cit., p. 348. [2] Ibid, p. 349.

of antagonizing the governing authorities. According to Struthers, the pamphlet had a rapid and wide circulation, and produced results:

> Its effect upon the public mind must have been rousing and salutory; and not the less so, that it came out anonymously, and was not known to be the production of a Relief, dissenting minister.[1]

In the pamphlet, and in public discussion in both Scotland and England, Douglas faced the arguments of the slave-owning planters and the slave merchants. He was prepared, along with "every real friend of humanity,"[2] to contribute towards the indemnification of the planters, if this was necessary; but the slave trade could no more be condoned, or its abolition delayed, than could murder or robbery. It stood condemned for what it did to the slaves, and also for the havoc it worked in the lives of those who operated it.

Throughout the pamphlet, Douglas rests his appeal on the teachings and the spirit of Christianity, the accepted laws of human decency, and the principles of the British Constitution. If he owed anything to the writings of Paine, or to any of the defenders of the French Revolution, there is no clear trace of it in this work. But his appeal to the people does reflect something of the awakening which was beginning to take place in Scotland under the impact of

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1 Ibid, p. 349.
2 Douglas, The African Slave Trade, p. 117.

contemporary revolutionary events:

> My fellow subjects, learn your own weight and interest in the Constitution, and hold fast the privileges which it secures you, as you would wish that neither you nor your children should be brought under a yoke of bondage which our forefathers would by no means bear, whatever we may incline to do.[1]

There is no explicit reference to the French Revolution, or to its democratic principles, though Douglas has obviously been affected by both. One feels that the writer is aware of the fatal danger of linking the anti-slavery movement with the events in France (thus appearing to threaten the members of Parliament); instead, he shows himself simply as an independent, vigilant, determined prophet of mercy, justice, and freedom.

The concourse of contemporary events and trends, following in the wake of the American War, has aroused his humanitarian enthusiasm and made him less reticent in declaring his dislike for the Tory status quo. Tamely to yield to the intimidating decision of the members of the House of Commons (the defeat of Wilberforce's motion) would teach those in power to treat the just wishes of the people with contempt. Every Briton, he insisted, had an unmistakable right to petition the legislature and the Throne; it was his duty so to do:

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[1] Ibid, pp. 184,5.

> [He] ought to do it with a firmness becoming the magnitude and importance of the cause in which we have embarked. If need be, let our rulers know that they are servants of the public at large, bound to rule for their good, and, in their legislative capacity, to conform to their wishes when duly made known. Where the people are despised, and denied their due weight in any state, the fault is their own. They are never deprived of their essential rights, till by their tameness and servility . . . they justly merit such a fate. In religious matters, too many are content to be the dupes of time-serving priests, who would lord it over their brethren; and in political concerns not a few are disposed to copy the same example. Had our ancestors possessed such a spirit, we would be still under the oppressive yoke of despotism . . . Let us quit ourselves like men, for the cause of justice and humanity is the cause of God, and will triumph over the illiberal efforts of men.[1]

The "keenness of political inquiry," which had, by the end of 1792, "pervaded the whole of Caledonia," had aroused Douglas at least a year earlier. He was clearly patriotic, but it is equally clear that his zeal and courage have received a revolutionary impetus. Possibly the impetus came from France, via Tom Paine, the impact of whose writings were then being felt in Scotland. But Douglas was then above forty years of age, and had firm, seasoned, liberal opinions of his own, which did not always correspond to those of Paine. There is no evidence to indicate that he helped to circulate the writings of Paine; nor was he connected with any reform society during 1792.

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1 Ibid, pp. 185,6. In his latter days, Douglas complained of the "culpable apathy of the people" as an aid to the enemies of liberty (see An Address to the Judges and Jury, p.9).

2 See the Caledonian Mercury, Oct. 4, 1792; also Meikle, op. cit., p. 91.

But if the parliamentary representatives of the people should choose to deny or ignore the expressed wishes of the majority of the people, what then was to be their course? In this case, Douglas argued, the legislators, as representatives and official servants, would "merit the strictest animadversion and forfeit the important station they now held in the community."[1] The continuance of the slave trade would bring upon those responsible, and upon the country, the severe judgment of God. Therefore, concern for national safety alone would require that no enlightened person should keep silent; the people must exercise their constitutional right to protest. In the meantime, Christians should refrain from the use of West India sugar and rum, products of slave labour. Above all, they must not grow weary if success did not come readily. They must persist, in the confidence that the cause was of God and would ultimately triumph.[2]

Douglas was to find (if he did not then perceive) that the opposition, strengthened by the new developments on the Continent and Britain's entry into the war, was more formidable (and 'the people' were weaker) than his argument had supposed. Pitt, who had supported Wilberforce when the latter first brought forward his motion, soon became cold towards this and all other attempts at reform. The

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1 Douglas, The African Slave Trade, p. 186.
2 Ibid, p. 185.

optimistic hopes of Wilberforce and his friends were sent into an eclipse by events and forces which by the end of 1792 were rushing towards a grand climax, in France and in Great Britain.

Events leading up to the Third General Convention of the Friends of the People, October, 1793. The closing months of 1792 were crucial and tragic months for Douglas and his fellow-reformers. August 10, 1792, marked the beginning of the more violent phase of the Revolution in France. Subsequently, the Jacobins rose to power and liquidated their more moderate rivals, the Girondins. These developments were eagerly watched from across the Channel, in the light of Burke's earlier prophecies. On November 16, the French opened the Scheldt to all nations; and, a few days later, the French Assembly declared its intentions to offer help to all peoples who were striving for liberty.

November, 1792, also witnessed public manifestations of discontent in Scotland. On November 6, Dundas was burnt in effigy in Perth. And on November 16 (the day the French decreed the opening of the Scheldt), there was an attempt to plant a Tree of Liberty in Dundee. The attempt failed, but a few days later, in the same town, a mob attempted to unload a cargo of meal from a ship which was not allowed to dock because of the Corn Laws. This provoked a series of incidents, culminating in a huge bonfire in the High

Street and the display of a second Tree of Liberty. Troops were called out to disperse the crowds, and order was restored soon afterwards.[1] But the riots were sufficiently disturbing to the authorities and to the holders of property to give Pitt overwhelming support in calling out the militia (though the real cause of the disturbance was not disaffection but the stubborn refusal of the authorities to amend the Corn Laws). The rioters in Dundee and the violent revolutionists in Paris seemed to be both marching to the same music:

> The same cries of 'Liberty and Equality' were at that very moment resounding all over France. There the Tree of Liberty had become the symbol of democracy. . . . To all lovers of order, the lower classes in Scotland seemed to be rushing headlong down that path of innovation which in France had led to revolution and finally to the massacres of September.[2]

A few weeks later, Douglas took up residence in Dundee as pastor of the West Port Relief church.

On December 11, delegates from the Scottish Societies of The Friends of the People met in Edinburgh for their first General Convention. The delegates, belonging mostly to the middle and upper classes, gave voice "for the first time to the newly awakened aspirations of democracy."[3]

1793 was the year of the great clash between reaction and radicalism. Moderating influences, towards the middle of the year, largely withdrew from the field of active

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1 Meikle, op. cit., p. 97.
2 Ibid, pp. 97,8.
3 Ibid, p. 110.

reform, with the result that the radicals, under strong adverse pressure, became less cautious, while their conservative or reactionary opposites grew more inflexible. Arrests and State trials began in January, 1793. This set off a vigorous exchange of political pamphlets and a wave of hysteria. The established clergy, along with the middle and upper classes generally, were with few exceptions on the side of the Government.[1] Villages were divided into "rival camps of Government Men and Democrats,"[2] to the decided disadvantage of the latter. In February, Britain declared war against the French Republic. This step caused a lull in agitation for reform, and reform talk gave place to criticism of the Government's war policy. However, by April of the same year the radicals had revived sufficiently to stage their second General Convention. This time there was a noticeable change in the delegates, most of whom were from the lower-middle classes.[3] Despite opposition, the delegates determined to persist in the cause of reform.

June saw the suspension of moderate burgh and county reform efforts, owing to the paralysing effect of the French Revolution. During October, Muir, the champion of radical reform, and Palmer, a Unitarian minister in Dundee, were

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1 See Caledonian Mercury, Dec. 15, 1792; Meikle, op. cit., pp. 115,16. A typical sermon is that of A Shanks, "Peace and Order Recommended to Society," 1

2 Meikle, op. cit., p. 116.

3 Ibid, p. 125.

tried and sentenced to transportation. As we have seen,[1] the effect of these unjust measures of repression among the young reformers was to arouse a kind of desperate determination. Despite all discouragements, "almost all the clubs of the previous year had been revived,"[2] and about one hundred and sixty delegates were present during the sessions of the third General Convention of The Friends of the People, in Edinburgh, on and after October 29. The Convention sat for four days, during which time they voted to petition Parliament (or the King direct) for annual parliaments and universal suffrage, to ask for redress of grievances, and to address a message to the Crown on the evils of continuing the war. One of the delegates, and an active participant in the proceedings, was Neil Douglas, Relief pastor in Dundee.

Douglas and radical reform. Soon after going to Dundee in January, 1793, Douglas joined the Dundee Friends of the Constitution.[3] That he was active and influential in the local society is evidenced by his being chosen as one of the two delegates who represented the society at the third

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1 Ante, 34, 35.
2 Meikle, op. cit., p. 139.
3 See his Strictures on the Author's Trial, p. 67. This society was the less radical of two reform societies in Dundee--the other was the Friends of Liberty. The former was founded in Sept., 1792, and consisted of some 470 members when Douglas joined it. Many of the members, according to Douglas, were "respectable in point of wealth and station." Douglas joined the society on the condition that it would strive for the abolition of patronage.

General Convention in Edinburgh. Another indication of his political interest and activity is seen in a satirical poem, written sometime during 1793, to caricature the radical reformers:

'Fye, let us a' to the meetin'
For many braw lads will be there,
Explaining the wrongs of Great Britain,
And painting them out to a hair.

And there will be grievances shown
That Ne'er was kent aught thing aboot,
And there will be things set agoing,
That'll end in the devil I doot.

And there will be Laing and George Innes,
The Reverend Neil Douglas, I trow,
What rowed fra Dundee in a pinnace,
And left the seceders to rue.'[1]

The other Dundee delegate was the Rev. James Donaldson, who was also a dissenting minister.[2] Both he and Douglas took significant parts in the proceedings of the Convention; they were called upon, successively, to chair the meetings. The fact that Douglas was then Moderator of the Relief Synod, was mature in age and in experience, and was, perhaps, at the peak of his success as a Relief preacher, may account for the deference shown him.[3] Apart from these qualifications,

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1 Kay's Original Portraits, vol. i, p. 427.

2 Donaldson was President of the Dundee society. He was a Berean minister, and, like Douglas, he had been a shoemaker (copy of Edin. Gazeteer in Scottish Correspondence, Public Record Office, vol. 9, Nov. 5, 1793).

3 However, "J. B.", a Government spy, reports from Dundee: "Douglas we know little of. He came here only twelve months ago as minister to a Relief Congregation--both of them [Douglas and Donaldson] are very little respected in this place, and very little known." (Scot. Corr., vol. 9, Nov. 19, 1793).

he was in sympathy with the goals of the Convention: universal suffrage and annual parliaments.

Early in the Convention, it was Douglas who moved that a congratulatory note be sent to Thomas Muir, then awaiting to be transported to Botany Bay. Later, he moved that the resolutions received from the Nottingham delegation (calling for parliamentary reform) should be reprinted "with such remarks as might be judged proper."[1] The motion was carried, and Douglas was chosen to head the committee. He was also chosen as one of four deputies to visit Colonel McLeod (not present at the Convention), "to see if he stood to his principles."[2] It was moved by Douglas, and carried, that the Convention publish their disapprobation of the slave trade.

It is not clear whether or not the presence of Douglas and Donaldson helped to disarm the fears and suspicions of the authorities and the general public. But the presence of the two ministers did do something towards moderating, or restraining, the desperate determination of the younger radicals. Also, there was a definite religious emphasis in the Convention proceedings. The delegates unanimously agreed to recommend to all the local societies of the Friends of the People that they follow the example

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[1] See the Proceedings of the Convention, in State Trials, xxiii, p. 395.
[2] Ibid, p. 398.

of the Convention, by "commencing and concluding their meetings with prayer. . . . [and] that a public prayer should be made by the societies for the Lord's assistance in the cause of reform."[1] The Government spy, who attended the sessions (the proceedings of which he thought were dull and ludicrous, rather than dangerous), added a humorous touch at the end of his report to London on this phase of the Convention. Referring to the prayers of the two clergymen, and to the general religious atmosphere, he wrote: "So you see, my good friend, we are not all 'French Atheists,' although we ape some of their peculiarities--and altho' some of us 'condemn ourselves in that which we allow.'"[2]

Near the close of the Convention (before the arrival of the English delegates), Douglas delivered "a most judicious speech upon the absurdity of representing property instead of men, and thus degrading the dignity of our nature."[3] This address was in support of a motion to petition Parliament for universal suffrage and annual parliaments. The motion was carried unanimously. Evidently, Douglas had by this time become convinced that his appeal to the people to protest was futile, unless and until the people had an effective voice in local and parliamentary elections. Universal

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1 Ibid, p. 403.

2 Scottish Correspondence (P.R.O.), vol. 9, "Proceedings of the Convention at Edinburgh, from October 29 to November 22, 1793", f. 41.

3 State Trials, p. 406. There is no further account of the contents of this address.

suffrage was implicit in his pamphlet on the slave trade.[1]

In its closing session, the Convention moved a vote of thanks to the country delegates--particularly, to Douglas and Donaldson--for their presence at the Convention. Shortly afterwards, the country delegates retired, the business of the Convention being finished and a time having been agreed upon for the next Convention. Later, the delegates from England and Ireland arrived, and the Scottish delegates who remained were reconvened. Departing delegates were requested to return to Edinburgh, but the Dundee society declined to comply. Perhaps, as a kind of compromise, Douglas sent to the secretary copies of his book, Thoughts on Modern Politics,[2] with authorization to sell them and devote one half of the proceeds to the Convention funds. The Convention (now the 'British Convention') returned a vote of thanks to "the Reverend Citizen Douglas."[3] But Douglas perceived the dangerous drift of the Convention proceedings. Not long after the delegates had reassembled and declared themselves a national body, the Edinburgh authorities ordered them to disperse. Yet, despite these warnings and mounting public suspicions, the

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1 Ante, 150.

2 Appears not to be extant.

3 The title 'Citizen' was introduced immediately after the arrival of the English and Irish delegates, and thereafter it was used freely, especially by Skirving, Margarot, and Gerrald. Lord Daer had used the title in the first General Convention of the Friends of the People, but it was not then conspicuous, and seems to have escaped the notice of the authorities.

young leaders of the Convention seemed to proceed from one reckless extreme to another. Some of their actions seemed obviously borrowed from the French; and neither the authorities nor the populace were in any mood to tolerate such an irritation.

The Dundee society, in response to Skirving's request to allow their delegates to return to Edinburgh, sent their cordial good wishes, but declined the request. In the letter, which was written by Douglas, the society pledged themselves to persist in the cause of reform "by every eligible and legal means."[1] However, they regarded with forebodings the late proceedings, as they felt they might be prejudicial to the cause of reform. "It is possible," the writer reminded Skirving, "to make more haste than good speed."[2] Douglas feared that rumours of the recent meetings in Edinburgh had hastened the removal of Muir, and so endangered his life.

This letter reveals much about Douglas's political sentiments at this time; it also indicates his place among the political radicals. He shared the ideals of Gerrald,[3] but he saw the futility and the peril in which the weak, vulnerable reformers were becoming involved, by trying to force the hand of those in power with the symbols and

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1 The letter is included at the end of Douglas's An Address to Judges and Jury, p. 39. Also, see Appendix C.

2 Ibid, p. 40.

3 Douglas later called Gerrald "perhaps the brightest genius of the age," See Strictures, p. 68.

methods of the French! Whatever might be their intentions, employing revolutionary methods and jargon would appear to the magistrates, to the Government, and to all the holders of property, as a threat. And whatever views Douglas might have held, at that time, regarding the course of the French Revolution (the reign of terror during 1793 would not have convinced him that he had been wrong in regretting the abrupt levelling of rank), he was eager that it should not wreck the fragile beginnings of reform in Britain. That he did not succumb to desperate, irrational idealism, on the one hand, or to defeatism, on the other, is surely much to his credit.

Douglas published the above-mentioned letter in 1795, and at that time he defended the use of the title 'Citizen.'[1] There was no right to assume, he affirmed, that the term had any hostile or unpatriotic connotations. It was to be found in the Bible, and it had been used by Christians for centuries. If this was an attempt, on Douglas's part, to divert suspicion from the reformers, it was probably not very successful. But this was not the last time that he sought to disguise undesirable speech with the cloak of scripture.

Douglas and the triumph of reaction. The dispersion of the British Convention shattered the effective resistance

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1 He himself had used the larger title "Gentlemen and Brother Citizens." See An Address to Judges and Jury, p. 39.

of the political radicals in Scotland. By linking their agitation for reform to the French Revolution, the Scottish radicals brought themselves within reach of the unfriendly authorities; and they alienated many, or most, of their more cautious and able associates, who might have helped to keep the movement going. As organized reform agitation was blocked, without the basic grievances being removed, aggrieved feelings were driven 'underground.' Hence, 1794 witnessed sporadic manifestations of seditious discontent, especially in the west of Scotland.[1]

There is not sufficient data to enable us to trace the course of Douglas's activities from 1794 to 1797. He did not repudiate radical reform, as did Chalmers; nor did he withdraw from politics, as did Haldane. Instead, he would have defended the cause of reform against its enemies, both from the extrème droit and the extrème gauche. After the dispersion of the British Convention, during the Scottish 'reign of terror,' he seems to have dissociated himself from the dangerous radicals, and to have used his influence to dissuade the radicals from further antagonizing those in power. In the summer of 1797, before going on his mission to the Highlands, he intervened in time to prevent the reformers of Glasgow and Paisley from staging an open meeting, after they had been ordered not to meet "above a certain number under any roof."[2]

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[1] See Meikle, op. cit., p. 147, et sqq.

[2] Douglas, Strictures, p. 69.

Douglas regarded this as another trap, laid by the enemies of reform, to place the reformers at the mercy of the law. At his insistence, arrangements for the open meeting were cancelled. On the other hand, Douglas had lost none of his eagerness for reform when he published his second volume of sermons, in 1795. These sermons are important, because they helped to keep alive the resistance to reaction and growing despotism which threatened to destroy all hopes for constitutional reform in Great Britain.

The year 1795 was another crucial year for the reformers and for Britain. The threat of a French invasion had been in the air, more or less, since the outbreak of hostilities between the two countries. In November, 1795, the French Government passed into the hands of the Directory, and the threat of invasion became more serious. The new danger helped to unify the country and to strengthen the Government. The papers of Glasgow and Edinburgh regularly carried declarations of loyalty from clubs, cooperations, and the clergy. On the other hand, religious bodies--and especially the Churches outside the Establishment--could not but be affected by recent moves towards religious liberty on the Continent. By its Constitution of 1795, the French Government separated Church and State: State salaries, which the Catholic clergy had hitherto received, were cut off, and complete liberty of all worship was proclaimed. In the previous year, the Prussian Territorial Code had guaranteed unrestricted

liberty of conscience in Prussia. The desire for, and progress towards, religious freedom were increasing.

It was at this time that some of the Relief ministers publicly declared themselves against the war, and in favour of the disestablishment of religion.[1] Douglas belonged to this minority persuasion. "At this inauspicious period," he wrote, "when the very term Reform is becoming odious to many . . . [the writer] openly avows himself one of those who wish for reform in these lands."[2] He prayed for the happiness of all rulers, but since the beginning of the war with France, his loyalty to the Government had been strained:

> He could not help regarding, from the beginning, the formidable combination against France, struggling to break the galling and servile bonds of despotism and superstitution . . . [This is], in effect, a combination against the designs and purposes of the Almighty.[3]

As for religious freedom, and the freedom to engage in open political discussion, it was reasonable to assume that the

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[1] The war was aggravating the misery which the people were enduring because of the bad crops. In the Glasgow Courier, (Nov. 24, 1795), there appeared a letter signed by "A Paisley Volunteer," accusing the Rev. Patrick Hutchison, Relief minister in Paisley, along with certain tradesmen of the same town, of trying to inflame the minds of the people against the Government. Hutchison served notice to the public that the accused intended to prosecute the author of the letter. However, he did not do so, and, later, the accuser reaffirmed his accusation, supporting it with a letter from six inhabitants, who had left Hutchison's church because he "crammed his sermons with criticisms of the Government, and exhortations to the people to "stand up for their rights as men and as Christians" (see Glasgow Courier, vol. v, Dec. 3, 1795; Jan. 2, 1796).

[2] See Extracts from Sermons, Recommending a Reformation Worthy of Britons and of Christians, p. 5

[3] Britain's Guilt and Danger, Preface, vi.

original Source of all just authority would not delegate to others--to civil and ecclesiastical authorities--what he did not claim for himself; namely, the prerogative of forbidding his creatures to inquire into the "nature, tendency, and measures of his administration . . . to approach his Throne . . . and there order their cause, and fill their mouth with arguments."[1] Subjects should, indeed, pray for, and obey, those set in authority over them; but "Rulers may as unquestionably forfeit their right to allegiance, as subjects their right to protection."[2]

Douglas's political views in 1795 had not changed, essentially, from what they were in 1792, when he published his Monitory Address and the pamphlet on the slave trade. He is more than ever convinced that the French are involved in terrible tragedy. But the confusion has been the result, mainly, of the stubborn refusal of the old régime to allow necessary reforms. The same judgment could overtake the British Nation, but Douglas prays that it might not do so:

> I avow myself as one of those that felt, and still feel, a conviction, upon mature thought, of the necessity of such a measure (political reform) in present circumstances, to prevent all risk of a convulsion in our nation, the immediate effects of which might be terrible. (italics not in the original).[3]

There is no evidence to indicate that he ever entertained

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1 Ibid, Preface, vii.
2 Ibid, p. 76.
3 Ibid, p. 78.

hopefully the prospect that the French would successfully invade Britain; nor do his writings show that he wanted to see republicanism displace the Constitutional Monarchy in Britain (though this is less clear). He had an admiration for, and affinities with, both the founders of the American Republic and the founders of the Republic in France. These sentiments were reinforced by the reaction of the British Tories. Also, he was one of the Relief ministers who ardently hoped that the separation of Church and State in France (and in America) would be followed by the disestablishment of religion in Britain. But at this stage, it would be rash to say that he was not sincerely loyal to British Royalty, and to parliamentary government. An early biographer of Milton said of that poet:"Whatever he wrote against Monarchie, was out of no animosity to the King's person . . . but out of a pure zeale to the Liberty of Mankind."[1] This description might be applied to the zealous warnings of Neil Douglas to the British people and to their rulers during the French Revolution.

His mission to the Highlands. We have seen that Scottish Evangelicalism was stirred to missionary activity (and also united) by the political ferment and the events of the late eighteenth century. When the missionary challenge

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[1] Cited in W. T. Allison's Introduction to Milton's Tenure of Kings and Magistrates (edited by Allison), xiii, xiv.

reached Scotland from England in 1795, it was responded to in various parts of the country, and by ministers and laymen, within and without the Establishment. In May, 1796, the year before the Haldanes began their missionary activities in Scotland, the Relief Synod took steps to sponsor a mission to the Highlands. Both these missionary efforts derived, essentially, from a common source--the humanitarian, libertarian enthusiasm of the period,[1] which had been inhibited by fear and Government repression.

Douglas and a Rev. Mr. McNaught were appointed as Relief missionaries for the first year.[2] For Douglas, the mission must have been both an escape and an outlet for his restrained energy. He was in the midst of a financial dispute with his elders and the presbytery in Dundee;[3] and, as Fraser suggests, in these circumstances he probably welcomed the opportunity to visit old acquaintances and the romantic scenes of his native Argyleshire.

The missionaries were warmly received by large Highland audiences. This, Douglas attributed largely to the faithlessness of the resident clergy, and the coldness of their sermons. In contrast to this indifferentism (or

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1 See Struthers, op. cit., p. 393, et sqq. The response of the Relief Church seems to the present writer to have been less a defensive strategy than Struthers implies.

2 Douglas had made a similar attempt, on a smaller scale, about ten years earlier. He, and the Highlanders who befriended him, were ill-treated as "sectaries", and the mission came to naught. See Struthers, op. cit., p. 397.

3 See Ante, 135,6.

formalism), Douglas spoke to them in their native Gaelic, and he spoke fervently, without the use of notes. He listened to the sorrowful complaints of mothers, who were distressed at the prospect of having their sons called into military service, removed down to England, and finally sent abroad to fight in a war, of the cause and issue of which they knew practically nothing. Douglas insists in his Journal that he did not, at any time, enter into political discussions (in accordance with his promise to the Synod). But he could not have concealed his sympathy for his "poor countrymen in the Highlands,"[1] or his impatience with the authorities in Church and State, who, he felt, were causing this distress. He was never connected with the Independent movement, Haldane/ and so he had no personal interest in their controversy with the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. But he makes it clear that he is in agreement with the Haldanes, as regards Church establishment.[2]

It was as impossible for Douglas to avoid a clash with/the system of Church patronage as it was for James and Robert Haldane (though he was not so tactless as the younger Haldane). His missionary experiences intensified his dislike for the system. Patronage, he thought, was depriving the Highlanders from receiving sound gospel teaching; and it had

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1 This phrase is a recurring refrain in several of Douglas's writings, especially in his Journal.

2 See his Journal of a Mission to the Highlands, p. 26.

been the means of alienating the ministers from their people. Also, he loathed the manner in which ecclesiastical dignitaries boasted of their "legislative and executive power," and their "Clergy-courts" which were patterned after civil courts.[1]

While he was itinerating in Argyleshire for the mission, a rumour was circulated that Douglas had prayed that the Duke of Argyle, and all patrons and great people, might be "turned out of their castles and estates and cast down to hell." Douglas poured contempt on the "pitiful sycophant" who had instigated the report. He explained that the Duke had recently acted in favour of a religious group who had expressed the wish to withdraw from the Church of Scotland and form a Relief church.[2] He had thanked God for the Duke's action,

> . . . and begged that the great might be led to copy his example, and [might be] admonished by the fate of their brethren in a neighboring nation, who had been driven from their stately dwellings, and divested of their possessions, because they had lorded it over God's heritage; adding a request that we might never come to experience the like in these lands.[3]

In all probability, the report did distort what Douglas actually said. It might have been a petty attempt to take advantage of the triumph of reaction and to curry favour with the Duke. In any case, it soon came to naught.

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1 Ibid, p. 39.
2 Ibid, p. 63; also Struthers, op. cit., p. 397.
3 Loc. cit.

But from first to last, Douglas was a reformer--whether he was pamphleteering against the slave trade, evangelizing in the Highlands, or trying to help steer the cause of reform through the narrow strait, between the Charybdis of angry hopelessness on the one side, and the Scylla of Tory power on the other, his tactics were determined by his temperament, and by the exigencies of a difficult situation; but neither the disappointments of the French experiment, nor the triumph of Tory reaction could check his persistence.

Chapter VI

NEIL DOUGLAS (CONTINUED)

The Man and His Writings

Douglas was not a systematic theologian; nor was he much concerned with ecclesiastical affairs, as such. Rather, he was a practical man of action, deeply concerned about the social, economic, and religious needs of all the people of his day. He was a prophet, who, despite his limitations, saw ahead of his time. And like all real prophets, he was courageous and resolute. These qualities (together with some mistakes on his part) made it inevitable that his writings would not receive the honour of his countrymen during the French revolutionary period.

Much of Douglas's literary work was presented to the public in the form of pamphlets, written between 1792 and about 1800, in the midst of pastoral work and social and political agitation. Of all his written works, these are the freshest and most forceful. This was, of course, not unusual, since literary activity in England and in Scotland rose on this swelling tide of new, surging ideas and visionary enthusiasm. As a dynamic speaker, and as pamphleteer, Douglas was in the vanguard of reform throughout the seventeen-nineties. He identified himself, more than either Chalmers or Haldane,

with the lower classes, though he actually belonged to the intellectual, middle class.

Preparatory trends and traditions. It is important to remember that Douglas had already lived more than one half of his life when the Revolution in France began. He had certainly been profoundly affected by the older traditions, and by indigenous emotional and intellectual currents which, in England and in Scotland, persistently cut across or fed into the stream of the main, established traditions, throughout the eighteenth century. Towards the century's end, these currents widened and deepened into a major force, or forces, not to be ignored. One of these forces (as we have already seen) was the gradual upsurge of passion. Another conditioning factor in the background was the tradition which extended from the Scottish reformers through seventeenth and eighteenth century Puritanism.

The pre-romantic, Evangelical sentimentalism of Cowper, Edward Young, and James Hervey (to mention the three names which recur in Douglas's writings), was an important influence in the development of Douglas's thought and personality. His shorter poem, The Lady's Skull, which he published along with the Monitory Address in 1792, seems to be a poetic adaptation (and a poor one) of Hervey's Meditations among the Tombs. The same theme is dominant in both: The grave is the ultimate leveller; earthly gain and social

distinctions are vain. In the tomb, there lay a "promiscuous multitude. They rested together without regard to rank or seniority. . . . All the distinctions that subsisted, was a grassy hillock, bound with osiers; or a sepulchral stone, ornamented with imagery."[1] The Lady's Skull echoes this gloomy preoccupation with death:

> 'In the grim tomb,
> Proud beauty's bloom
> Is soon transformed into a ghastly vail . . .
> There youth and age,
> The fool and sage,
> In one promiscuous, ghastly ruin lie.'[2]

But, for Hervey, the contemplation of death was restful, because it meant a surcease from striving after earthly gain and recognition. It harmonized so beautifully with Pope's gospel and the Great Chain of Being concept. Hervey is a good example of the blending of Christian humility with Stoical resignation. But this Stoicism and otherworldliness was combined with a passionate concern for all living, feeling creatures, and with an excited fascination and wonder for the whole of nature.[3] The same ardent feeling, and reverence for life, was manifested by Cowper and Young; and it was reflected in Douglas, especially after 1792. He is at one with Young in denouncing those who "treat the

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1 James Hervey, Meditations among the Tombs, p. 7.
2 See Douglas's Monitory Address, p. 239.
3 See Hervey's Descant upon Creation, passim.

ardent preacher as a fool":

> 'Think you my song too turbulent? too warm?
> Are Passions, then, the pagans of the soul?
> Reason alone baptised? . . .
> O ye cold-hearted, frozen Formalists!
> On such a theme, 'tis impious to be calm;
> Passion is reason, transport temper, here.'[1]

This was the energy which, when fully activated in Douglas, became a drive for concrete, humanitarian reform. It needed to be aroused, released, and channelled.

Of equal importance were the Scottish Reformation and the Puritan Revolution. It is significant that with Douglas the French Revolution appears not to have led to any sudden eruption, or spectacular conversion. It rather accelerated a fermentation of feelings and ideas, which was already in progress during Douglas's early, formative years. There was a cumulative revolution behind, which joined forces with that of 1789 (and 1792). Haldane never felt the full force of the violent struggles in Scotland for religious liberty in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries--probably because of his pious, but aristocratic, rearing, and his military detachment. Chalmers, thirty years younger than Douglas, grew up in the larger Revolution which eclipsed or fulfilled previous upheavals. Douglas, on the other hand, belonged to the revolutionary tradition within the 'age of chivalry';

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[1] Quoted by Douglas in the Monitory Address, p. 89.

he also belonged to the new age, ushered in by the French Revolution. Thus, in his thought, from 1792 onward, the revolutionary tradition (especially the writings of John Milton on liberty), and the contemporary revolutionary drive towards freedom, interpenetrate. The latter sometimes draws out and complements the former, and sometimes contradicts it. But always the conditioning of the Scots reformers and the Puritan tradition must be kept in mind.

Douglas and civil and religious liberty. At the very outset we are confronted by a dilemma. We have seen that most of the Relief ministers more or less enthusiastically welcomed the achievement of liberty in France. Of these, probably none was more fervent than Douglas. A further quotation, in addition to those cited earlier, will show this:

> 'What joyful tidings reach our ravished ears?
> Let every heart exult with joy to hear
> Of welcome Liberty's triumphant day . . .
> Ye various Powers, that rule on earth, survey
> The sudden exit of despotic sway . . .
> All ye who bear the Patriot's noble name,
> All ye who feel a Patriot's noble flame,
> Whose bosoms glow in Freedom's glorious cause,
> Express with heart-felt joy your loud applause!'[1]

Mirabeau had earlier pronounced against the presumption of mere religious 'toleration' and had called for positive religious liberty. The French Constitution of 1795 went

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[1] Ibid, p. 184.

further; it separated Church and State, and withdrew all State support from the clergy. Thus, the French Republic had adopted the radical principle which Roger Williams had preached, and on which he had founded Rhode Island, a century and a half earlier. Some Britons might pity the "wandering and fugitive," erstwhile patrons of religion in France. Douglas did not. He believed that these patrons had received what they deserved. Furthermore, those who stood in the way of full religious liberty in Britain should see in this "what they themselves deserve, and have reason to dread in the course of a retributive Providence."[1]

But despite the exultation of Douglas, he was, in fact, almost as far removed from the religious liberty of Mirabeau and the French Constitution as John Milton had been from the radicalism of Williams. He was against even toleration for Roman Catholics in Britain. It was impolitic and wrong, he thought, to adopt a liberal policy towards a "bad religion which God has disapproved."[2] The liberty which he desired was a liberty for non-Papists--and especially for Evangelicals. It was still too closely bound up with an emotional revulsion from Roman Catholicism and Episcopacy in Scotland, and from all religious establishments. The immediate impact of the French Revolution had the effect of

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[1] See Britain's Guilt and Danger, p. 76.
[2] Ibid, pp. 198,9.

strengthening this deeply embedded phobia.

However, though he could not, in practice, transcend his strong prejudices against Roman Christianity, Douglas could not escape the impact and the implications of the emerging orientation towards real religious freedom. In 1795, he wrote:

> The only toleration or establishment of religion, that belongs to the Powers of the earth, seems to be to protect its professors in the enjoyment of their rights as men, and subjects of the State, while they act worthy of that protection, never presuming to interfere between God and his umpire, Conscience, whose Lord he alone is.[1]

Taught by Milton that men would "with freedom lost, all virtue lose, and fear of God,"[2] Douglas was determined never to resign his right (and the right of all men, except 'Papists') as a man, a Christian, and a minister of the gospel, to declare the truth as he understood it. A fervent championing of abstract religious liberty, and an insistence on the separation of 'nature' from 'grace' (which he did not learn

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1 Britain's Guilt and Danger, p. 200. A friend of Douglas wrote of him, many years after Douglas's death, "Had he been living now, and found [patronage] abolished, and certain other reforms introduced, I have no doubt he would be quite a zealous advocate for the defence of the Auld Kirk of Scotland. In no part of his writings can I find him objecting to an Established religion." (See News Cuttings in the Signet Library, Edinburgh, pp. 93 ff.) But Douglas did so object. He believed firmly that the principle by which Church and State were joined was "always hostile to civil and religious liberties" (Britain's Guilt, pp. 200, ff).

2 Quoted often by Douglas, e. g., in Britain's Guilt and Danger, Preface, viii.

from Milton) was combined with an equally fervent fanaticism. The revolutionaries in France were involved in a similar dilemma. Some of the apostles of 'Reason' and liberty became as fanatical as the prelates whom they had displaced. The conditions necessary for real freedom--psychological and social--simply did not exist, either in France or in Scotland. It required years for the legislation and the abstract doctrines to be individually assimilated and translated into practice.

Puritanism and Humanism. The interaction of Puritan ideas and feelings with those of the French revolutionary period is seen again in Douglas's attack on certain social conditions and practices which were common in Britain during his lifetime. Besides the slave trade, there were the cruel treatment of soldiers and seamen, duelling, and the community sports which entailed cruelty to animals.[1] On the whole, Britons in the eighteenth century suffered few serious qualms of conscience because of such practices.

Douglas's writings in 1792 show that he (like his non-Puritan contemporaries, William Blake and Robert Burns) was distressed by these conditions, and by the complacency which allowed them to persist. His Christian humanism fused with a revolutionary optimism: Man's inhumanity to man was

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[1] See the Monitory Address, pp. 16, 49, 74. The sadistic cruelty of this period is depicted in some of Hogarth's drawings.

not inevitable; social, as well as individual regeneration was possible. The proof of this was the French Revolution. His fervour and boldness increased during the course of the war with France. He bewailed "that barbarous refinement of modern times, which leads many of the professed disciples of the meek and merciful Jesus to rejoice in the slaughter of their fellow men," and to pray for heaven's assistance in so doing.[1] The war was, in one sense, both just and necessary: it was just, "as a means of punishing both us and our enemies . . . and necessary, to accomplish some important designs in his Providence."[2] But the war was, also, the infernal work of the "Butchers of the human race." The war system was "a tree of death, planted amidst streams of human blood, and fattened by carcasses of human kind, thrown in heaps upon heaps around its widely extended roots."[3] These strictures were meant to apply to the terrorists in France, as well as to the British ministry.

But Douglas's prophetic-romantic humanism, admirable if somewhat naïve, was curiously blended with a less admirable Puritan asceticism, which was intent on suppressing all sensuous and intellectual pleasures. Thus, he denounces, along with duelling and social injustices, "the play, the circus, card-room, and the ball"; women should remain quietly in

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[1] Britain's Guilt and Danger, p. 29.
[2] Ibid, p. 91. [3] Ibid, pp. 92-94.

their appointed place of subordination to men.[1] When he condemns cock-fights,[2] one is not sure whether it is because they are cruel, or because they afford pleasure to the spectators (especially to the upper classes). This Puritan dilemma became acute in the late eighteenth century; the 'Puritan conscience' clashed with militant humanism, and the former was the loser.

Douglas and the Burke-Paine controversy. In 1796, Douglas wrote his Dialogues on the Lord's Supper. It was a defence of his proposal to have frequent observances of Communion. He was aware that the spirit of the times was opposed to innovations. But, like all those who sought to obtain (constitutional) political reform, he insisted that he was not introducing an innovation; he was pointing back to the archetypal pattern. Moreover, timely reform, and not stubborn resistance to needed change was the way to meet the revolutionary challenge:"When the nations are shaken and the tokens of God's displeasure have gone forth . . . when the Lord is pleading a controversy . . . is it not seasonable for his people to return to him?"[4] The French Revolution, Douglas believed, was a continuation of the Reformation, and opposition to change (in politics and in religion) was a perpetuation of "the spirit and leaven of Popery." It was

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1 See Monitory Address, pp. 16, 138 ff. 2 Ibid, p. 16.
3 Douglas, Dialogues on the Lord's Supper, pp. 138,9.

in keeping with the "friendly disposition, publicly shown to Popery" by the British legislature.[1]

While Douglas did not publicly endorse the political extremism of Paine, his Dialogues do unwittingly reflect something of Paine's controversy with Burke over the French Revolution (though again the Miltonic influence is clear). He had no use for customs and traditions in determining beliefs and practices in the Church (or churches):

> When men receive what they profess to believe and practice in religion merely from the force of education, the authority of the church to which they belong, or the sanction of custom and example; and not because they find it . . . enjoined in the scripture--this is really a species of popery.[2]

Unlike Burke, he seems to have felt no great need for a cumulative body of traditions. His concern was not with the organism which had grown through the centuries, and which gave nourishment and security to all its members, but with the 'primitive' pattern, to which Christians should return. This revolutionary, sectarian urge to dispense with tradition, and to rebuild on the primitive pattern (as we saw in Chapter IV) had unconscious affinities with the 'Nature' concept of the secular, revolutionary Utopians. As Prof. Baillie has pointed out,[3] this reverting to some primitive archetype has been the main concern of most great reformers

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1 Ibid, p. 140. 2 Ibid, p. 141.
3 John Baillie, The Belief in Progress, p. 91.

of the past.

Disillusionment and apocalypticism. Douglas continued to deplore the war with France. Britain's interferrence, he prophesied, would do more to spread the Revolution and to establish Republics "than the writings of a thousand Paines, the operation of Jacobin principles, or the conquest of French arms."[1] But there are indications that, by the end of the century, the French have disappointed his hopes: By renouncing the Christian God, the revolutionaries had brought upon themselves divine judgment. Prospects for France were not promising.

In his Journal (published in 1799), Douglas describes a romantic scene in his native Argyleshire, and the impressions which this wild, natural scenery made upon him (in 1797):

> The wood was in full verdure, and diffused, amidst the descent of dew, a very refreshing fragrance; while the melody of birds from almost every spray, that song of praise first presented to the Creator on earth, delighted the listening ear. To heighten the beauty of the scene, the moon shone bright in a cloudless sky, amidst the host of stars, while the adjacent loch, smooth as a molten mirror, reflected her full orb in all its glory. What a profusion of beauty, and benignity do the works of God present! If so much is displayed in a world inhabited by rebels, and polluted with their guilt; how transcendently glorious must the mansions of bliss appear, where none but loyal subjects dwell![2]

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[1] Britain's Guilt and Danger, p. 145 note.
[2] Journal of a Mission to the Highlands, p. 99.

The romantic sentiment is akin to that of Wordsworth. And, underneath, there is also something of that poet's disillusionment. His humanistic hopes, mingled with his apocalyptic expectations, are now on the wane. The "mansions of bliss" are more real now (partly because of his wife's tragic death) than they were in 1792. That he did not abandon moral questions in despair was due, mainly, to the fact that he never put all his hopes (as did some of the Romantics) in the French Revolution as a human achievement. The apocalyptic reformer sees, or imagines he sees, an otherworldly purpose and dynamic in historical crises, which serve as a safety net underneath earthly hopes. But this does not necessarily induce a spiritual withdrawal from the human situation (as the non-apocalyptic spirituality of Haldane did). The social relevance of Douglas's otherworldly ecstasy is shown in his Messiah's Glorious Rest, published in 1797.

1797 was the year in which conservatism triumphed over all forms of radicalism; hence, it was natural that Douglas should experience a revival of apocalyptic hope. In Messiah's Glorious Rest, he looks forward to the millennial reign of Christ. It will be an earthly, historical reign, in which the nations will be converted to the gospel, and made happy "in the enjoyment of the grand privileges and prospects of Christianity."[1] His conception is devoid of fantastic

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[1] Messiah's Glorious Rest, p. 11.

notions; the reign of Christ will relieve the hurts and injustices of human society, and of all creation. It will be a democratic reign: the people will "possess and exercise their inherent right of choosing their own rulers in the State and pastors in the Church."[1] Government will then exist, not to enact and execute penal laws, but to provide "the largest portion of public good, at the least expense and burden." There will be none of the "external pomp" which kings display.[2] The overthrow of idolatry will precede the commencement of the glorious rest. Here, behind the veil of scripture, are all the ideals and aspirations, the realization of which had been interrupted by political reaction. The prophetic warning follows:

> But let all ranks be admonished by what God is doing in our day; and believe that such a revolution of sentiment as throws ancient foundations out of course . . . does not take place in the world, without the special direction of the Lord of all, who has his own wise and beneficent ends to answer by the shakings of the nations, and even the tumults of the people.[3]

The revolutionary shaking of the nations, the spread of infidelity, and the rising missionary movement, at home and abroad, were evidences of the divine initiative; hence, they were hopeful signs of the commencement of the reign of Christ. This is an interesting example of the relevance of apocalyptic hope, in a time of social and political crisis.

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1 Ibid, p. 53.
2 Ibid, p. 55.
3 Loc. cit.

Also, Douglas was, after 1797, in a period of theological transition. He was moving in the direction of Universalism, and away from strictly orthodox Calvinism. He had emerged from the storm and stress of the fin de siècle more sober than he was before. But, despite failures and the dereliction of most of the friends of reform Douglas remained unsubdued. He continued to astonish his hearers "with the freedom and boldness with which he spoke upon political affairs."[1]

During his Edinburgh residence (1799-1800), Scotland suffered another severe dearth. This, together with the hardships caused by the Corn Laws, stirred up more discontent, and drew from Douglas a pamphlet on the high costs of provisions.[2] While we do not know the contents of this pamphlet, the title, the occasion, and subsequent events, show that Douglas was still active in the interest of reform. Later, he wrote a tract on the death of George Washington. However, before he could publish it, the manuscript, together with the copies of the pamphlet just mentioned, were rifled by six men from the Sheriff's office. Some of the material was destroyed in the street, and the rest was carried away to the Privy Council. When the pamphlets were not returned,

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[1] See the sermon preached on the occasion of the funeral of Neil Douglas, Jan. 19, 1823, by William Worrall, p. 7.

[2] The pamphlet was entitled, Strictures on the High Price of Provisions: the Probable Causes and the Most Effectual Remedies. No copies have survived.

Douglas wrote to the Lord Melville, complaining of the treatment. The latter seems to have intervened on Douglas's behalf, because the remaining pamphlets were, soon afterwards, returned to the author. The incident is interesting for the light it throws on the character of the Lord Melville, as well as that of Douglas.[1] Douglas was, ever afterwards, grateful to Dundas for his intervention.

Conversion to Universalism. Not long after his exclusion from the Relief Church, Douglas publicly embraced the teaching of Universalism; and, after deciding upon his native Greenock as a field in which to begin his new work, he returned there, after revisiting the place of his birth in Argyleshire and announcing to his Highland friends and relations his conversion.

Universalism, as a distinct movement, emerged in Britain as an offshoot of Calvinistic revivalism--it had "the system of Calvin as its basis."[2] But the movement gradually slipped away from its early mooring. Elhanan Winchester

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[1] Because of his first wife's relation to Dundas, Douglas was offered a favour (we do not know just when, but probably in 1792, during the anti-slavery agitation), but he refused it. When friends insisted that he should accept it, he replied that he so much disliked Dundas's principles that he would accept no favour at his hand (he later apologized for saying this). He had resolved to avoid all favours which might restrict the conscientious discharge of his duty as a Christian and a citizen (see his Strictures on the Author's Trial, p. 74). However, in his later years, Douglas defended the Lord Melville against his political opponents.

[2] See The Universalist, vol. i, pp. 4 ff.

(whose writings were most influential in Douglas's emancipation and conversion to the new doctrine), originally a Calvinist, became sympathetic to Arminian views. Under his leadership, the movement made progress--in London, at least, it was gaining ground by 1794 when Winchester returned to America. However, after this date, Arminian tendencies carried the movement into the "dead sea of Unitarianism."[1] By 1830, Universalism, as a distinct movement, was practically extinct. During the greater part of the last twenty years of his life, Douglas was its strongest apologist in Scotland, if not in all Britain.

Douglas never prided himself in being unorthodox in theological matters. He vigorously protested against the tendency to merge with Unitarianism. As a Universalist, he waged a verbal battle on two fronts (a task which was not new to him): On the one hand, he warned against associating with Unitarians, and, on the other hand, he challenged his orthodox, Calvinistic opponents to display their biblical and reasonable proofs against the final, universal restoration of fallen creation--their evidence that "God has no farther respect to the bulk of mankind in giving them being, and preserving them in it, than to get his elect out of their loins!"[2] For Douglas, Universalism was the arch which brought

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1 Ibid, vol. i., p. 6.
2 Douglas, Antidote Against Deism, Preface, iv.

together Arminianism (which taught that Christ died for all) and Calvinism (which affirmed that all those for whom Christ died should finally be saved). He did not deny the existence of hell, but he affirmed that divine punishment was always corrective, rather than vindictive, and that no one would remain in hell. This was the original, true doctrine which the 'Papists' had corrupted.[1] He failed to see why a doctrine which taught the final destruction of all evil and human misery should be condemned as being inconsistent with the justice of God.

It was uncommon in 1800 for an orthodox Scottish Presbyterian to adopt such a theological position. The relatively mild, rational climate of opinion which the Moderates had brought about (with the help of Burns and others) was radically changed by the ecclesiastical coup d'état, and the deluge of reaction, theological and political, which swept Scotland at the end of the eighteenth century. Along with the rise of the 'Wild' Party, there was a recrudescence of the preaching of 'hell-fire.' Fraser says the public were at that time enamoured by such preaching,[2] and the Rev. Hugh Mitchell, who resigned his living in the Church of Scotland because of the French revolutionary crisis, sarcastically gave as one of the rules for being 'the popular

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1 Ibid, p. 78.
2 Fraser, op. cit., p. 351.

preacher":

> Let him as opportunity affords, send to hell all the Atheists, the Deists, and the Democrats. If his zeal, on this point, do not burn up his charity, he will be strongly suspected of attachment to Atheistical, Deistical, or Democratical principles.[1]

Douglas's acceptance of the new doctrine was no easy decision. His frustrations and bereavements must have done something to make the cold rigour of the Calvinist system inadequate. Then, again, the seed of theological non-conformism had been planted in his mind earlier by the writings of Milton (who was no uncritical Calvinist). Miltonic 'heresy' (rather than the moderation of the 'new lights')[2] was for Douglas a half-way house to a break with the Calvinist system. Without this, it is doubtful whether Douglas could have brought himself to stand against the Scottish reform tradition and the rigid orthodoxy which at the end of the century made free discussion, on so vital a point, extremely difficult. The preaching of hell was a sort of psycho-social defence, especially during the Scottish reign of terror, and the later period when a Napoleonic-Jacobean invasion was expected.

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1 See Fordyce's The Preacher's Manuel, p. 28.

2 Douglas imbided Puritan and Calvinistic ideas quite early in life. This may account for a lack of any direct, discernible influence on his thinking of the 'drawing-room' liberalism of the Scottish School. In his writings, he appears to be oblivious to the influence of Hutcheson and Adam Smith.

Douglas had had serious doubts about orthodox Calvinism long before he declared them openly (in 1800). In his sermons and in his other writings he had warned of eternal punishment,[1] but he always did it with hidden reservations. In early life, soon after he embraced Christianity, he was disturbed by this doctrine of the eternal prevalence of sin and misery over the greater part of God's intelligent works. The difficulty seems to have been more acute in later life.[2] In 1797, "detached beams" of the true light incited hope and fresh discontent.[3] He read the scriptures, and sermons by Universalists. But the difficulties were not removed; "The time had not yet come." Thereafter, he secretly cherished the hope that God would "manifest the agreement of his word with a more universal display of his mercy than is commonly admitted."[4] While he did not openly disclose his hopes (because of the fear of its abuse by the profligate), some of his hearers detected a note similar to that which was being sounded by the Universalists.[5] His exclusion from the Relief body made him freer to follow his own inclinations.

Another factor, in the break with theological tyranny, was the disillusioning of his earlier, earthly expectations. As we have seen, Douglas never succumbed to the pressure of

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1 Cf. The Lady's Skull, passim.
2 Antidote against Deism, Preface, iv
3 Ibid, p. 85.
4 Ibid, Preface, iv.
5 Cf. ante, 137.

social disapproval in the struggle for enlightened social change. But by 1800, the residual revolutionary enthusiasm in Scotland had been drained off (in one way or another), and humanitarian reform was obviously suspended while the Napoleonic spectre was at large. Under such circumstances, the prospect of eternal perdition for the greater part of suffering mankind was even more distressing. The wanton destruction of human values, and the negation of purpose in human affairs, made it all the more necessary to affirm the ultimate purposefulness of human existence, which divine concern and divine power would consummate. If Chalmers had sought to escape the consequences of revolutionary freedom by a return to the past, and Haldane, by a withdrawal to his perfectionist 'island,' Douglas found an escape from his dilemma in the future. Ardent longings and expectations found their fulfilment in a Promised Land of perfect peace, justice, and joyful reconciliation of all things to God.

The ethical consequences were, again, perhaps the most significant feature of this position: Douglas continued to agitate for concrete reform. The last phase of his life will show this.

Trial for Sedition and Later Days

Douglas's decline. The last phase of Douglas's life is both tragic and pathetic. He had resembled Jeremiah in

in his unheeded denunciations of national backslidings, and in his drawn-out inner conflicts; and, like that prophet, he was to end his career, not in an aura of national glory, but in the dense mist of public suspicion. He was tried before the High Court of Justiciary in Edinburgh in May, 1817, on a charge of sedition. The jury returned a unanimous verdict of not guilty, but not everyone (especially in Glasgow) was convinced that the eccentric, popular, old Glasgow preacher (he was then sixty seven) was not really guilty of slandering George the Third, and the Prince Regent. The charges seem fantastic, but, in truth, the last days of Douglas were fantastic.

The trial did not excite so much interest as did most of the other State Trials of the same period, but this was probably due to its short duration, and to its being held in Edinburgh rather than in Glasgow, Before the High Court of Justiciary, the sight of this old preacher and stubborn rebel must have aroused in his friends mixed emotions of admiration, sympathy, and pity. He was "old, deaf, dogged, honest, and respectable."[1] Less than a year previously, his son had been tried in the same place and had been convicted. In addition, prolonged political and theological conflicts had been his lot during most of his active ministry.

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[1] Cockburn, Examination of Trials for Sedition, vol. ii, p. 194

These conflicts had aroused and sharpened his creative faculties (like Byron, he grew in conflict), but they had also taxed his strength and disturbed his mental and emotional constitution. For some time, Douglas had lived under the threat of recurring mental and emotional illness. This weakness had something to do with his being attracted (together with some of his contemporaries) to the morbid sentimentalism of the time, and it made the harsh Calvinistic doctrine of eternal torment a greater menace.[1] Also, such sentimentalism, and the dilemmas of the revolutionary period, aggravated his native predisposition. This vicious circle, together with persecutions and failures, largely accounts for the pronounced egocentrism of Douglas's writings in this final phase.

These writings, and the descriptions of others who knew him, indicate rather strong paranoidal tendencies. His defence of justice, and his legitimate defence of himself, are, at times, obscured by self-pity and a childish pride, which go far beyond any of his earlier writings. It was as though, like Samson Agonistes, he felt his strength ebbing for the last time; and sensing that posterity would soon forget his struggles, he determined that he would not be forgotten. With one mighty lunge, he would create a spectacle

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[1] Cf. Lord David Cecil's life of Cowper (The Stricken Deer, passim); also, H. G. Graham's short life of the Scottish poet, Robert Ferguson, in Scottish Men of Letters in the Eighteenth Century, p. 379.

which would defy his enemies and insure him a place in the emerging world order, which he would have helped to bring about, but which he could not see. That his early dislike for the Tories had become an intense hatred is clearly shown by Peter MacKenzie's vivid description of his preaching,[1] and by Douglas's account of his declaration before the Sheriff of Glasgow.[2] Before his trial, he reaffirmed his loyalty to King and Country. When asked by the Sheriff if he wished for a revolution, he replied that that was the very thing he most dreaded: the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, and British encouragement in the restoration of the Bourbons in France and Ferdinand in Spain, would drive the people to rebel. "What did Rehoboam get," he asked, "by despising the petitions of the people, and answering them roughly?"[3] But Douglas was no willing martyr to his country. He did not display during his trial the Prometheus-like heroism of Muir and Gerrald. Indeed, one is not even sure, despite the jury's verdict and the testimony of Lord Cockburn, that Douglas was not using his apocalyptic metaphors (e.g., 'Britain, the mystical Babylon') as a cloak to cover a desire to see the British Government overthrown--partly, to avenge his own grievances and compensate for his own failures.

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[1] In Reminiscences of Glasgow and the West of Scotland, vol. i, pp. 449 ff.

[2] See Strictures, pp. 11 ff.

[3] Ibid, p. 14.

However, despite his foibles and weaknesses, Douglas did manifest, before and during the trial, admirable courage. To quote Lord Cockburn's words:

> It is impossible (for me at least) not to admire the plainness with which this ancient and poor reformer stands up against his enemies. He seems to have had a pleasure in alarming and defying them. 'He does not consider that the battle of Waterloo was a matter of rejoicing, but on the contrary.' 'And the following he begs may be taken down as a part of his declaration, and that it may reach the ears of the rulers of this nation:--That his Royal Highness has more to apprehend from the measures of his official servants than from the madness of his people.'[1]

If the expectation of humanitarian reform had been projected into the future (never without relevance to the present), a new set of circumstances brought the attention of Douglas back to where it had been during the French Revolution. The new challenge was met, if not with the same intellectual vigour, at least, with the same resolute determination.

Events leading up to Douglas's Apprehension. In 1812, during the Cotton Spinners Strike in and around Glasgow, the industrial classes again began to assert themselves, and the Government countered with new repressions. In 1815, the clauses in the Statute of Artificers authorizing magistrates to fix the wages of labour were repealed, as a con-

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[1] Examination of Trials for Sedition, vol. ii, p. 194; also State Trials, vol. xxxiii, p. 631.

sequence of the strike. "Nothing was more calculated," says Dr. Meikle, "to render the industrial classes more conscious of their utter helplessness; and in the same year a new corn law increased the irritation."[1] The new law rescued the landed proprietors from ruin, at the end of the war (by keeping the prices up), at the expense of the industrial workers. Fresh riots broke out in the chief manufacturing centres. A Glasgow petition to the Commons complained that the parliamentary representation of the people was "radically defective."[2] Veteran reformers who had been active participants in the stormy days of 1793 now reappeared on the scene of action. Major Cartwright, the leading spokesman for the Hampden Club, toured the manufacturing districts of Scotland, advocating universal suffrage and annual parliaments. Some societies were formed, and again the hue and cry of "revolution or rebellion" was raised by the authorities. The Lord Advocate for Scotland was informed:

> . . . that secret committees of the disaffected consisting chiefly of the Ringleaders of the Combination in the year 1812, and of such members of the Seditious Societies of the year 1793 as are still alive, have been formed in different quarters of Glasgow, Dumbartonshire, and Stirlingshire.[3]

There is no explicit reference to Douglas in the Home Office

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1 Meikle, op. cit., p. 220.
2 Loc. cit.
3 Scottish Correspondence (P.R.O.) vol. 26, Dec. 25, 1816; see also Meikle, op. cit., p. 221.

Correspondence (Scotland) for this period. It appears that he took no active part in reform agitation, but rather lent his moral support to the younger leaders.

The inflexible policy of the Tory leaders, and economic hardships, had given to the doctrines of radical reform new life. Also, the sudden defeat of Napoleon and the peace of 1815 had finally relieved enemy pressure and created fresh demands for freedom and social and political amelioration. The revolutionary energy which had been driven underground after 1800 now reappeared.

> Meanwhile a generation was coming into action so young that its mind had been awakened by the excitement of the French Revolution, and not so old as to have been put under a chronic panic by its atrocities.[1]

The new crisis came early in 1817, after riots in London and the insults to the Prince Regent on his return from the opening of Parliament had created a new state of alarm in England. Following the example of Pitt, the ministry introduced two repressive bills, one suppressing seditious meetings and the other suspending the Habeas Corpus Act. These measures were a bitter disappointment to all the friends of reform; to not a few (and Douglas was one of them) they were fresh tokens of what the labouring masses could always expect from a Tory Government. These repressive steps were taken, especially,

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[1] Cockburn, Memorials, p. 279.

to forestall hidden developments in Scotland which the new Lord Advocate regarded as serious. Douglas offered the use of his premises to the reformers for their meetings, if they encountered difficulty.[1]

The trial. The Government's decisions were followed by arrests and State Trials. One of the first to be apprehended was Douglas. The charges against him were novel and striking: he was accused of having slandered both King George the Third and the Prince Regent, by comparing them, respectively, to Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar; for having said publicly that subjects were condemned without trial and without evidence; and for calling the House of Commons a corrupt House where seats were sold, "like bullocks in the market." These radical criticisms were made, allegedly, in an address which the prisoner had given in the old Andersonian Institution (where his meetings were held) on the fifth chapter of Daniel's prophecy, early in 1817. He had begun to lecture on the book of Daniel about two years earlier (during the onset of agitation against the Corn Law of 1815 and the repression of the industrial workers). During the crisis which followed the London riots and the insult to the Prince Regent, the lectures were resumed, or continued.[2] Always something of

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1 MacKenzie, op. cit., vol. i, pp. 306,7.

2 It is not clear whether Douglas had continued to lecture on Daniel from 1815, or whether the lectures were resumed in 1817, after a break.

a sensational preacher, Douglas sometimes became furious when politics were being discussed, and 'the people' were arrayed against the Tories. In 1817, the biblical account of Nebuchadnezzar's derangement and Belshazzar's follies provided both the point of departure and the scriptural cover for an attack on the almost-invulnerable strongholds of Tory power. Considerable interest, and some excitement, were aroused in Glasgow by these addresses, until the magistrates interrupted and arrested the speaker on a charge of High Treason, or sedition. The charge was later reduced to sedition, and the trial was held on May 26, 1817.

Douglas pleaded not guilty to all the charges. The Solicitor-General rested the prosecution largely on the verbal evidence which was expected from three town officers, who had been sent by the Glasgow magistrates to Douglas's meetings as spies. However, in the witness box they could not recall the exact words of the preacher, but only impressions. All the Crown witnesses had the 'impression' that the preacher did not like Royalty. They distinctly recalled his likening Nebuchadnezzar to George the Third, and Belshazzar to the Prince Regent, but they could not furnish the evidence which would have convicted the prisoner of slandering Royalty, or undermining the authority of the Commons. "There probably never was a prosecution," reflects Lord Cockburn, "depending on the proof of spoken words, which so signally

failed."[1] All the witnesses testified that Douglas spoke very fast, and that this, together with his pronounced Highland accent, made it difficult for strangers to understand him.

If the Crown witnesses had failed to produce the evidence which was expected of them, the witnesses in defence of the panel removed all doubt (in the court) of the prisoner's being guilty or not guilty. Lord Cockburn has summarized the testimonies of the panel's witnesses:

> The import of what these six swore was that the prisoner, though an avowed and hoary reformer, was a loyal man, always praying for the King and the royal family more fervently than most of the Established clergy did; that his very first sermon, after a recent trial and conviction of his son for swindling, contained an encomium on the fairness of the trial, and on the administration of justice . . . that neither the expressions nor the sentiments ascribed to him had been uttered; that he spoke only of kings, sins, and visitations of Providence in general . . . and that, on the whole, it was an orthodox and loyal discourse.[2]

After the evidence had been heard, the Solicitor-General admitted that the prisoner's guilt had not been established. He remarked, however, that all the witnesses, and the declaration of the prisoner, showed him to be a political preacher (which was no small offence). Furthermore, he had made some comparisons between Nebuchadnezzar and the afflicted King George. Even this was not allowed, and was sufficient to put the prisoner under suspicion. The jury's verdict, he

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1 Examination of Trials for Sedition, p. 193.
2 Ibid, pp. 195,6.

affirmed, should be, not proven.

It appears that these unproved suspicions were, in fact, essentially correct. This was the unequivocal testimony of another reputable witness, Peter MacKenzie, who had often attended Douglas's meetings, and who was himself a political radical. MacKenzie's testimony is difficult to gainsay. He was a law student in Glasgow when Douglas was in the "zenith of his popularity" there[1] (this was just before Douglas was apprehended). He seems to have been attracted by the novel and rather fantastic pulpit mannerisms of Douglas, and by his bold philippics against the Tories--especially against Lords Sidmouth and Castlereagh. Later, MacKenzie affirmed that, after having listened to many preachers for more than half a century, that of all the preachers he had ever heard, none could excel the Rev. Neil Douglas "for stamping or thumping, or the hot fire of his eloquence, when he became fairly excited with his inflammable matter."[2]

As to the contents of the discourses, they were (if we can believe MacKenzie) what the Crown prosecution affirmed them to be, both as regarded the King and Prince Regent, and the Commons. The sentiments were even more furious than the prosecution had charged. And Douglas had gone so far as to give the names and designations of the 'concubines' of the

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[1] MacKenzie, op. cit., vol. i, p. 446.
[2] Ibid, pp. 451,2.

Prince Regent.[1] No other reformer of the day had gone so far; but, "as Mr. Douglas was a minister of the gospel, and otherwise highly connected, it was thought that . . . he could say anything he pleased in his own 'poopit.'"[2]

The town officers , after hearing Douglas, gave in written precognitions, and on the strength of these, Douglas was arrested. However, these witnesses later differed among themselves as to just what the prisoner had said, and they became more confused as the day of the trial approached. During the trial, they could not state the prisoner's applications of the events in Daniel's prophecy. They requested to see the precognitions, but Francis Jeffrey, chief counsel for the accused, objected, and the court sustained the objection.[3]

Douglas's acquittal came as a surprise to most of

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1 In the copy of Neil Douglas's trial proceedings, which is now in the British Museum (1131. i. 10. [1.]), Lord Cockburn made the following MS notation: "This prisoner was a poor, old, deaf, obstinate, doited body. The Crown witnesses all gave their evidence in a way that showed they had smelt sedition , because they were sent by their Superiors to find it. The trial had scarcely begun, before it became ridiculous, from the imputations thrown on the Regent--and the difficulty with which people refrained from laughing at the prosecutors, who were visibly ashamed of the scandal they had brought on their own master. Jeffrey had an excellent opportunity for a severe . . . speech. But he was in a complimentary humour, and thankful to get off without more trouble--and missed it."

2 MacKenzie, op. cit., pp. 450,1.

3 This is MacKenzie's explanation. The request to see the precognitions, and Jeffrey's objection, are not included in State Trials. These details must have been either deleted or not recorded.

his enemies and his friends in Glasgow, who had "believed that he would be transported 'beyond seas' to a certainty."[1]

Concluding defence. In his Address to the Judges and Jury (prepared just before the trial but not read in court), Douglas defended his conduct as a reformer. He affirmed that he had consistently warned his hearers against the "reformation of French Jacobins, which originated in atheism, proceeded with anarchy, confusion, and bloodshed, and ended in despotism"; and that "those who took the sword to redress grievances, or to pull down one form of government and raise another, would perish by the sword."[2] He further insisted that the reform he had always advocated had not called for annual parliaments and universal suffrage. It was rather a reformation of morals.[3] Actually, Douglas had quite definitely allied himself, in 1793, to the movement which aimed at obtaining these radical ends.[4] He had not sanctioned a resort to force by the reformers, but some of his discourses contained expressions and sentiments, carefully disguised in biblical phraseology, which must have intensified an exasperation with all forms of Tory rule.

Also, in the Address to the Judges and Jury, the writer avails himself of the opportunity of laying before

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1 MacKenzie, op. cit., p. 456.
2 An Address to the Judges and Jury in a Case of Alleged Sedition, p. 33.
3 See loc. cit.
4 See ante, 158.

the holders of power his complaint against magistrates, some of whom "were as unfit to possess discretionary power over the people, as wolves are to be let loose on a flock of sheep."[1] In short, the sentiments and policies of Douglas in 1817 were still essentially unchanged from what they had been in 1793. He remains on the side of the people so long as they continue to act worthy of themselves.

In his Strictures on the trial, published in 1818, Douglas does not deny that he had said the House of Commons was corrupt. As to the Prince Regent, he does not recollect using the epithet "infatuated," but if he did, it was "in that compassion from which the prayer flowed."[2] He did not regard the battle of Waterloo as an occasion of national rejoicing; rather, Britons should be in a state of penitence for such shedding of blood. And, also, he believed that the defeat of the French at Waterloo "gave a death-blow to the liberties of Europe."[3]

Did Douglas deliberately try to turn the minds of the people against the King and the British system of government? Was his avowal of loyalty, during, and at the close of the trial, insincere? Probably, the answer to both these questions is, no. His analysis of the problem of power, of vitality and form, as posed by the French Revolution, was

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1 An Address to the Judges and Jury, p. 8.
2 p. 45. 3 Ibid, Appendix, p. 2.

too simple. Whereas, to some, the very mention of the French Revolution and Napoleon conjured up evil and fear, to Douglas, the Revolution remained, despite all the horror connected with it, the symbol of liberty for Europe. Thus, Waterloo meant for him essentially what 'Bastille day' had meant to Burke; each marked the end of a glorious era, and the beginning of tyranny. But Douglas was not conscious of any insincerity on his part, or disloyalty to his country. He was led to go further than he intended, in some of his later sermons, by his own exasperation, his wounded pride, and by his deafness. Also, his deft handling of scripture mislead him. According to MacKenzie, Douglas, before he left the bar, stated to the Lord Justice-Clerk,"that he would never more lecture about Nebuchadnezzar, nor say any words derogatory of his gracious Majesty the King, or to the disparagement of both the Houses of Parliament."[1] MacKenzie believed that he faithfully kept his word.

Thus was the sensational old preacher, whose career had been so varied and colourful, able to return to Glasgow in better spirits than when he left it. He had won his first major victory over his political opponents, and he had seen and felt at least a foretaste of the fruits of reform.

Shortly before his death, in January, 1823, it was reported that Douglas had recanted, or partially recanted,

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[1] Op. cit., p. 437, et seq.

his Universalism and his political radicalism. His successor, William Worrall, emphatically denied the report.[1] If Douglas did recant, it was the first time since 1792 that he had given ground in the struggle for revolutionary freedom. He deserves to be remembered as one of the very few Scottish clergymen of this period of whom this can be said.

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[1] See two letters (in New College Library, Edinburgh), addressed to Mr. McDermid, and Mr. Jamieson, on the Reported Recantation of Mr. N. Douglas; also Struthers, op. cit. p. 573.

Chapter VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

A Summary of Attitudes and Responses

At the centre of each of the foregoing biographical studies there has been an external challenge. The challenge was met by three men whose attitudes and assumtions were formed against a background of given social norms and traditional patterns of thought and behaviour. The individual response-to-challenge indicates something of the impact of the revolutionary challenge on the external norms and institutions. And, conversely, the turmoil, contrarieties, and intensity of the external, cultural crisis is felt in the inner conflicts and ambivalent responses of Chalmers, Haldane, and Douglas. Out of the welter of sentiments and responses, certain dominant responses emerge.

In the first place, the revolutionary challenge gave rise to a spirit of rebellion. The stoic spell of resignation ('whatever is, is right') was broken, and the way was open for the individual and for societies to strike out along new and adventurous lines. Of the three men whom we have considered in the foregoing studies, Chalmers rebelled most violently and compulsively against the privileged guardians of rank and wealth--until he had himself achieved some prominence and social recognition. His youthful exhibitions of resentment and indignation against the

upholders of the status quo in Britain, were provoked by a deep-seated feeling of being persecuted and thwarted, and by the abstract ideas of liberty and justice. And, though Chalmers abandoned the abstract ideas of the revolutionists, he never ceased to show something of his youthful, rebel spirit when his authority was challenged, or when he thought the real interests of the people were being disregarded or misrepresented by those in power. In the cases of Haldane and Douglas, rebellion was more deliberate and more gradual. Haldane and Douglas were both older than Chalmers, and their backgrounds were less rigid. Haldane had travelled widely before the French Revolution began, and had established his independence; because he was more detached from domestic and socio-religious authority, he did not need the revolutionary stimulus in the same way as did Chalmers. The same was true of Douglas, who by 1790 was a mature clergyman, after having experienced a good deal of the hardships of the working classes in Scotland. He rose more cautiously than either Chalmers or Haldane to the revolutionary challenge-to-rebel, but his rebellion persisted and developed to the end of his ministry.

However, the challenge-to-rebel would have been stillborn had the French Revolution not held forth brighter prospects for the future, growing out of political, social, and religious emancipation. These prospects generated an

enthusiasm which was the driving force behind reform movements and revolutionary, Romantic, and Evangelical enterprises. At first, Chalmers, Haldane, and Douglas, all saw in the Revolution 'glowing prospects' for the human race. Douglas continued to be hopeful about the end product throughout (at least) most of the storm-and-stress period. And when the concrete, historical fulfilment of his hopes was blocked, he found a fulfilment beyond history, first, in apocalypticism, and later, in Universalism--a synthesis of the Calvinistic doctrine of Providence and the humanistic idea of progress. His reconstructed primitive eschatology could transcend historical frustration and, at the same time, not forsake the historical situation. The 'Day of Jehovah', foretold by the Hebrew prophets, was, in Douglas's imagination, associated with the French Revolution, long after the Revolution had given way to a reactionary military despotism. Actually, the militant idea of progress had carried over a great deal from the old Hebraic idea of the messianic solution of history, as Berdyaev and other writers have pointed out. "The doctrine of progress," says Berdyaev, "is the 'herald of expectation,' necessarily concerned with the 'revelation of the invisible,' with the future."[1] This largely explains the strong appeal which the French Revolution had for Douglas and for other, non-quietistic, Evangel-

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1 Nicolas Berdyaev, The Meaning of History, p. 187.

icals. Chalmers, on the other hand, revolted against this sectarian, apocalyptic optimism. He soon became convinced that there was no salvation for mankind in revolutionary schemes, or in Whiggish attempts at legislative reform. But he remained hopeful. Man's redemption was in Nature (or Providence), in the accumulated wisdom and resources of the ages, and in Man's own capacity and inclination to improve himself, individually and collectively. The preaching of the Christian gospel, and Christian education, required time; but they were the means to the solution of all the problems of society. The non-revolutionary and pre-revolutionary sources of this optimism (aside from the Hebrew-Christian tradition) were the nationalism of Burke, and the Scottish School of Philosophy, which had established in Scotland a tradition of academic liberalism, based on the purposefulness and benevolence of Nature, human and external. But the ardour of Chalmers's belief in, and hope for, man in society can not be separated from revolutionary ferment.

In the third place, Chalmers, Haldane, and Douglas were all victimized by the contradiction which inhered in the Revolution from the outset, and which became manifest after 1792, viz., the Revolution as ideal ("liberty, equality, and fraternity'), and the Revolution as fact (violence, confusion, and dictatorship). For Haldane and for Douglas, the contradiction remained throughout the revolutionary

period, though the former was able to escape the inner, personal tension which this problem created, by withdrawing from all ambiguous political conflict. Douglas felt the full force of the contradiction, yet he continued to agitate for domestic reform, and to believe that ultimately the revolutionary ideal would triumph over the mistakes and the ignorance of the revolutionary leaders. Chalmers dismissed the revolutionary ideal and regarded the Revolution as an unambiguous, destructive menace to freedom, as well as to social order. But Chalmers did not free himself of all inner tension. Democratic influences had insinuated themselves into his attitude, and despite his disavowal of the popular movement in politics, he eventually found himself at the head of a movement for Church reform which owed a great deal to popular, political agitation.

Mass Responsiveness to Radical Change

The three religious leaders with whom we have been primarily concerned were, in relation to the French Revolution, more or less typical of the Scottish religious groups to which they respectively belonged. It was not so much that the Revolution insinuated new ideas into these groups (though it did do this); what was more important, it revived the challenge and the problem which had been posed earlier by the Scottish reformers: the challenge of

revolutionary change on the one hand, and the need for order and security on the other.

The spontaneous and hopeful response which so many of the clergy in Scotland made to the French Revolution in 1790 was made possible by the work of their sixteenth and seventeenth century Protestant forbears. The Scottish reformers had successfully rebelled against the authoritarian Roman Church. It had been able to do this because the medieval Church-State system had become socially oppressive, and it had not allowed sufficient opportunity for personal freedom and growth; hence , its security had broken down. But while the established religious heteronomy was broken, the political and social structure remained basically feudal. Furthermore, Calvinism, once it had established itself in Scotland, became another form of religious heteronomy which came to exercise a domination almost as complete, and as unfavourable to psychological freedom as had the pre-Reformation Church. However, Calvinism (or Presbyterianism) had helped to set in motion forces which were, in combination with other forces, to shake violently its own contradictory superstructure, when conditions were more favourable to the emergence of the will-to-freedom. The struggles within the religious life of Scotland which began in the late eighteenth century, and which culminated in the crisis of 1843, were one in a series of cycles (within a larger context) which were

necessary in the gradual achievement of freedom. And in the seventeen-nineties, the French Revolution (as a social and psychological challenge) stood in relation to developments in Scotland much as the Continental Reformation had stood to the situation in Scotland in the sixteenth century.

Revolutionary change is not essentially the consequence of a spread of knowledge. The masses are responsive to a revolutionary appeal when their basic material needs are not satisfied because of the inefficiency or the oppression of the holders of power and wealth. Also, accepted values, fixed norms, and routine habits cease to have meaning--or they become inadequate. However, the individual may be unaware of this until these components of his psychological world are violently disturbed by some new, critical situation. In such a situation he is susceptible to new leadership, to conversion, or to revolution.[1] The success of the Haldanes and their friends, and of Douglas among the Highlanders in Argyleshire (as well as the religious experiences of Chalmers and Robert Haldane) must be seen in this light. The solution of Evangelicalism was in keeping with the hopes and fears of the ~~the~~ masses in the late eighteenth century. In the face of the reactionary panic of 1796-7, and the diverse and conflicting opinions about politics and the war with France,

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[1] Cf. Hadley Cantril's The Psychology of Social Movements, pp. 15, 16.

the preaching of the Haldanes and Douglas, while it lacked none of the enthusiasm of the political disputants, seemed to transcend their contrarieties and confusion. In a time of social and spiritual dislocation, Evangelicalism offered both novelty and certainty; its interpretation provided anchorage. Furthermore, its solution was within the reach of the poorest and the simplest.

Also, the Evangelical preaching of Douglas, Chalmers, and the Haldanes, struck the note of the French Revolution by appealing to the need of the lower classes in Scotland for recognition. It was not until much later (in the Trade-Union Movement) that the lower classes in Scotland came to have an effective voice in government and in economic affairs; but during the French Revolution they were roused by the spirit of democracy. The Evangelical meetings (which were democratic in nature) and the Evangelical preaching fed this vague, incipient feeling of 'belonging,' and did something to bring it further into consciousness. Douglas might refrain from preaching politics among the Highlanders, but his democratic sentiments, which were inextricably mingled with his religious concern, were making an impact on the insecure, unrecognized people who listened to him. And if the Evangelicals strengthened the forces making for political democracy, the original life of the young and vital Evangelical movement was fed largely by revolutionary and romantic currents.

It ceased to live in the same way as before, when the enthusiasm from these sources was withdrawn.

Conclusion

Scottish Evangelicalism proved inadequate, intellectually and ethically, before the strong tides of reaction at the close of the eighteenth century. It remained essentially a strong surge of feeling which could discompose men's minds and excite discontent with established ways, and which could inspire great benevolent and sacrificial ventures. But it failed to rise to the real challenge of the French Revolution. Narrow-mindedness, too much stress on individual conversion, and, at times, an almost cynical abandonment of the social and political struggle, prevented its leaders from giving Christian guidance where and when it was most needed. Its record in the struggle over slavery is good; its philanthropy is admirable, but in the long struggle for domestic reform, the Evangelical record, on the whole, is less commendable.

The revolt against time-honoured institutions, and the rise of the lower, working classes, have confronted the Christian Churches with a very serious and difficult challenge. Conservative by its nature, institutional Christianity has usually been on the side of 'law and order' in the revolutionary upsurges which have taken place in Europe during

the past two centuries. The contemporary revolution in Asia faces the ecumenical Church (and especially the American Churches) with problems and a challenge which are similar to those considered in the foregoing studies. Religious leaders have too often and too uncritically allied the imperatives of the Christian gospel to Nationalism, or to some form of social and political conformism. Again, the withdrawal strategy of Haldane is representative of a rather large segment of the Christian Church. This quietism may--and often does--take rise from a profound understanding of the real human situation, and from a sincere desire to maintain the purity and clarity of the Christian message. But such a position has become increasingly difficult. Neil Douglas was not a 'major' prophet in the history of the Church, or in Scottish Church History. If Chalmers tended to confuse the sanctions of the Christian gospel with Tory politics, Douglas was at times too eager to equate the 'cause of God' with the cause of 'the people.' But without such prophetic voices in periods of stress, the social witness of the Church would be pathetic indeed.

Christian faith must not be conformed to the standards of this world; at the same time, the Christian message must be accessible to all, and relevant to the problems and the various needs of men in different social situations.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

Selections from the correspondence of John Leslie to Dr. James Brown at St. Andrews, from the Portfolio of Holograph Letters Relating to Edinburgh and the University Life of the Time, 1790-1830, in Edinburgh University Library.

London
5 February, 1790

Dear James,

My heart warms when I reflect upon the scenes that are passed--this world, my dear friends, is full of toil and vexation--It amuses and deceives. You are surprised perhaps that I moralize. I have seen as much, I assure you, in the short time I have been here as to create disgust. I found the scheme of lecturing too expensive for a place divided between business and pleasure. I have therefore relinquished it. . . . . Lord Mountstewart applied to Dr. Kippis for a mathematical tutor for his son. I was strongly recommended; but the answer was an insult: "He would employ no Scotchman." Such is the gratitude of the Bute family--this is Scotland despised by her unworthy sons. . . . The English are not so illiberal; I am advised by several of my friends here to get into a family and endeavour to get forward in the Church of England. . .. I have attended the meetings of the Societies of the learned here and have endeavoured to form an estimate of their character--great names sound best at a distance. Pomp, formality, splendour, concealing shallowness of parts and scantiness of information--I wish that after the bustle were over I could be beside you near the academic

groves.

London
12 Jan., 1793

Dear James,

. . . The world seems labouring with mighty events. Will the English and French nations interchange characters? I know not whether to look with pity or indignation on the expiring efforts of privileged oligarchy. All the despicable and detestable arts of deception and detraction have been employed, and for the present, pretty successfully in this place! Penny pamphlets are sold in every corner of the streets, and large printed bills stuck on the walls, from the kind attention of the servants of the Crown to the "swinish multitudes." And I am afraid that their stupid admirers are entitled to that appellation. Their more genteel representatives, however, must have theatrical exhibitions of the brandishing of daggers. . . .

Edinburgh
9 Jan., 1794

. . . An awful tempest threatens this devoted island. . . . Our mild and enlightened judges have begun their winter campaign and are equally successful with our neighbours the French. Persecution and folly at home, disgrace and discomfiture abroad! What a miserable picture. Ça va, Ça ira. How looks the sagacious principle? But enough of this--a few months will establish the republic, notwithstanding the pious and charitable denunciations of the presbyteries. I

shall endeavour to keep up my spirits and improve my time, tho' my fortune should not be much on the rise. . . .

Edinburgh
24 April, 1794

Dear James,

I am much obliged to you for your information with regard to Dr. Forrest's intentions. . . . I wish you would take some suitable opportunity of sounding the dispositions of the other professors, and of representing to them that now is the time to save the College by resisting the monopolizing spirit of a family junto. I would undertake to teach the class on no consideration unless the succession were secured to me, in which case I might be induced to give a small premium. I am unwilling to let an occasion of this kind slip, tho' I perceive very small chance indeed of success. I likewise feel much indifference on the head. At St. Andrews I could have very little society and I might perhaps catch the drowsy torpor which generally prevails there. The temper of the ruling powers in Scotland is such as well might wean ones affections to his native country. Not to mention that if the spirit of innovation should at last burst forth in this island those monkish institutions, the universities, would be in a ticklish situation. If my application should totally fail, I shall feel not the smallest disappointment. If I were to succeed I should esteem myself happy in your friendship and society, and we should unite our efforts to rouse a spirit of discussion and kindle an ardour for science.

APPENDIX B

Letters by or about Robert Haldane, in Edinburgh University Laing MSS, Nos. 500 and 501.

a) Robert Haldane to R. or H. Dundas, dated Sept. 24,1796:

Honourable Sir,

Deeply impressed with a sense of the Excellence of the Gospel, and of the importance of conveying it to the Heathen nations, and feeling it more especially a duty to make it known to those miserable Idolaters who live under the British Government, I again entreat you to consider seriously the request I made in my former letter. Your cases, employments, pursuits, and views, great as they may appear to you, are in my view trifling when compared to the subject of this and my former letter, and I earnestly entreat you not to refuse what I do so anxiously solicit.

I and my associates applied to you, necause we thought Government was much more concerned in the business than the East India Company. Your views are more extensive than theirs; you have a controul over them, and as the different members of administration, as well as the King from the Throne have expressed their anxious wishes to promote and preserve the Christian Religion, we feel greater confidence in applying to you, and besides fully sensible that you have but to speak the word and it will be done. It ought especially to be assigned as a reason for applying to you that the question may deeply engage the Publick mind and that you are more interested than the Company can be--We deprecate delay and cannot view it in any

other light than a refusal. Persons are sent out in every official capacity . . . why should those who wish to go out to save the souls of men which are from day to day cut off by the stroke of death be retarded in their plans and hindered from engaging in the important work without delay.

Besides we think we have an equal right with the missionaries sent from the English Society. . . . We think our claim is not inferior to their. If no bad effects have arisen from their efforts to propagate the Gospel, why should they be feared from ours.

We may add that it will certainly be with an ill grace that we are refused when the Baptists are permitted to preach in Hindoostan. They went out without leave, and are strenuously exerting themselves in the District of Dinegapore to spread the Gospel. Would it not be hard if we who pay a respect to Government which we think proper, should suffer on that account, and be prevented from the possession of a privilege which others enjoy by treating it with neglect. .. . we are no bigots to any sect--what we wish to propagate is the great Doctrines and principles of Christianity--modes and forms of worship are with us things of far inferiour consideration. Should we be denied our request and prevented from going, application will be made from the different Societys for themselves . . . and we are confident the matter will not be allowed to rest till it be obtained. Indeed a refusal would be attended with disagreeable consequences, as there is hardly any thing that would

give the religious people of the Island a worse opinion of the Government of Great Britain of the existing administration, than being refused liberty to propagate the Religion of Jesus Christ, for which the members of the present ministry have frequently expressed, in the most positive manner, so great a regard.

Should you however, contrary to our wishes, give a flat refusal, we shall not be discouraged, nor relinquish our object. It is the cause of God, of the Redeemer, and of the souls of men; and we consider it our duty to persevere to the utmost. We will bring it before the Publick, and we have not a doubt, but we shall interest in our favour all the numerous friends of Religion, and of human happiness, of every denomination, and in every part of the Country. The lively concern they will feel for our success, the numerous petitions with thousands of signatures they will present, will so fully express the sentiment and wishes of the most virtuous and respectable part of the community, that we are confident Government would feel it a duty to comply with their request; nay, would not entertain a wish to contradict the desires of so large and worthy a body of men. But we declare again it is our earnest desire to be permitted to go quietly and not have the Publick mind at all agitated by the business.

I therefore entreat you, Sir, with all respect, to consider the subject of my letter, and not to turn away from me as an Enthusiast or a fool. It it be judged Folly in me to

be desirous of propagating Christianity in the world, how shall they escape the charge of hippocricy, who in publick declaim on the necessity of supporting it on account of its value and advantages to Society. If the one be a Fool, sure the other is a Hippocrite, in my opinion the least desirable character of the two. Deign then, Sir, to give this matter serious attention. You are entrusted with many talents by our Common Lord, and with extensive powers to promote the Eternal as well as the present happiness of mankind. I now wish you to employ these talents, and to promote the Eternal Salvation of the Pagans of Hindoostan. Death who knocks without distinction at the Palaces of the Great as well as the Cottages of the Poor, will ere long summon you to give an account of your Stewardship, and to be found in that day not to have forwarded every attempt, nay to have prevented a well meant endeavour to propagate the Gospel among the Heathen must fill the Soul with deep regret. But it is my sincere desire that you may not incur this Guilt; and I most earnestly wish that you may be enabled in your exalted employment, to promote the present and eternal Happiness of the Human race; and that you may obtain at last that eternal Felicity, which the Gospel ensures to all the faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

I am

Honourable Sir

Your most obedient Servant

Robert Haldane

b) William Wilberforce to H. Dundas, Sept 14, 1796.

. . . The bearer of this, Robert Haldane, Esq., of Airthrey, near Stirling, a Gentleman of liberal education, good understanding and well informed, having not only read a good deal, but visited the Continent and seen different and distant parts of the Globe. He is possessed of a fortune from 50,000 to 60,000 pounds, and thinks it his duty, having been brought some years ago to experience the power of religion, to employ a considerable portion of it in promoting the cause of God.

For more than twelve months his thoughts have turned to what might be done for Christianity in the East Indies and he has formed a plan for this, which to me at least appears wise, magnanimous, and highly meritorious in him. When you, too, know the nature of it you will decide for yourself

Mr. Haldane is well aware that without the permission of Government and the India Company, it would be impracticable to go out. The intention of troubling you with this is that should you approve of his scheme he might consult with you what might be the best mode of attempting to procure that permission. Should you allow Mr. Haldane to explain his intentions to you he will do it fully. . . . . .

Mr. Haldane I have known by character for two or three years, and personally for about twelve months, and by all that I have ever learnt he is a man of stricht honour, integrity,

prudence, and virtue. All good men, more or less suffer persecution, and he by worldly men has been reviled and especially because he did not approve of the war, on account of Politicks. He is a friend to his country, and if his sentiments by you are examined I doubt not but they will appear blameless,and for nothing but sentiment expressed at His own County Meeting has he ever been traduced. Perhaps there is no Country Gentleman in this part of the Country lives on his estate with more comfort, respectablity, and usefulness than he does. He is happy in himself. . . . and therefore no cause but the desire of doing good can lead him from home. . . .

At present it is necessary to confine the knowledge of this affair to as few persons as possible, but should it go forward, from every person of note and a serious cast here I am certain all that I have said with respect to character will be supported completely, for they [Haldane and his associates] are not obscure and unknown men. . . .

c) Rev. Dr. William Porteous to the Lord Advocate of Scotland, Edinburgh, 24 Jan., 1797.

. . . You have no doubt heard a great deal of this Missionary madness, and of Mr. Haldane's intentions of going to Indostan. He is refused leave by the E. India Company, but/is now endeavouring to interest the Missionary Societys in an application to Parliament--If these fail, I understand he

proposes to publish a Manifesto, or an appeal to the publick, which is expected to be very inflammatory.

Many of us have reason to believe that the whole of this missionary business grows from a democratical root, and that the intention of those who planted it was to get hold of the publick mind--and hereafter these societys may employ its energy as circumstances may direct. You may not have heard of the following fact, of the truth of which I can assure you: When Mr. McAuley, Governor of the settlement at Sierra Leone, went over last year, he found it in great danger of dissolution, through the intriques of a democratical club, at the head of which was a Baptist Missionary--and he has written home to have him recalled. These are the people who do not meddle with politicks. . . .

d) Dr. Porteous to the Lord Advocate, Feb. 21, 1798.

. . . In summer last I used the freedom to mention to you some of Mr. H's plans, the tendency of which appeared to me very suspicious. Since that time he has been very busy in carrying them forward. . . . Mr. J. Haldane, in the beginning of last year, made a tour to visit the Sunday Schools, the effects of which were soon visible. By his influence, he prevailed on some well meaning persons to open Sunday Schools on a new plan--old and young, men and women, boys and girls, were invited to attend. They did attend in multitudes, and in place of our simple exercises, a loquacious manufacturer from

Glasgow preached and prayed with vehemence till a late hour when he was pleased to dismiss his audience to walk home in the dark, sometimes to the distance of several miles. So far as I know, they have not directly meddled with politics, but obliquely, or directly they attack religious establishments and loudly censure the parish ministers. . . . At these meetings they circulate pamphlets, not political but calculated to produce discontent, to foster an aversion to the present order of things, and to increase that portentuous fermentation in the minds of the people, which though it may pretend to have no object that is censurable, is one of the most alarming signs of the times. Within a few miles of Glasgow we have at present no fewer than TWENTY of these schools. . . .

The ministers of the Church of Scotland have enjoyed ease and quiet so long that few of them have directed their studies to subjects of this kind . . . If any method could be fallen on to direct their attention to the subject of Lay preaching, in a way that would not irritate, it would be a very seasonable service. But I am afraid the difficulties and perils of meeting a set of enthusiasts will prevent it. . . .

APPENDIX C

A letter written by Neil Douglas on behalf of the Dundee Reform Society (the Friends of the Constitution); published in the year 1795:

Dear Sir,

Your favours requesting us to send our late Delegates, or others in their stead, to the Convention, proposed to meet at Edinburgh 19th current, (November, 1793) came duly to hand, and were laid before our Society. After some deliberation, tho' they expressed their earnest wish to show every possible mark of respect to the Delegates from England, and regret that it did not suit their convenience to wait on the last Convention before it broke up; yet, for certain reasons, which appeared to them of weight, they deemed it inexpedient, in present circumstances, to delegate any anew. They therefore, agreed to appoint their Committee to draw up a letter in their name to the Convention, should it meet, in compliance with which appointment we send you the following.

Gentlemen and Brother Citizens, we have pledged ourselves to support the cause of Reform by every eligible and legal mean in our power, and therefore wish well to every measure that promises success to your united exertions. Every one engaged in the cause, and acting in character, we are proud to call our Brother, and willing to cooperate with him so far as circumstances and prudence may permit. We are happy

to hear that the late Convention made so respectable an appearance, and conducted their discussions with such spirit and unanimity. We persuade ourselves their meeting may do essential service to the common cause, and so more than compensate all the expense and inconvenience of attending it. Yet, with all due deference, we beg leave to observe that calling a Convention together, so soon after their late meeting, may not be attended with the same beneficial effects. We wish, however, our fears on this head may be happily disappointed. Their late meeting has been publicly represented as seditious, and however clear it may stand of that charge, yet reassembling so soon may be deemed a daring insult to those in power, and as such resented, to the prejudice of the cause in which we are embarked. It is possible, according to the common proverb, to make more haste than good speed. We cannot help fearing that the rumour of this second Convention may have hastened the removal of that worthy Champion in the cause of Freedom, Mr. Muir, which may possibly endanger his valuable life.

We congratulate our Brethren from England for their zeal in the cause, and cordially wish success to their laudable exertions, and the exertions of the Societies to which they respectively belong. We think it exceedingly proper that the societies in and about Edinburgh should show them every attention and respect in their power, and have no doubt but they will; and we ourselves would have been happy to have

enjoyed the pleasure of a personal interview, though we see not this, in the mode proposed, to be conducive to the advancement of the cause of reform. We beg, however, they would accept of our friendly wishes, and the assurance of our firm attachment in the cause of our Country's peace and prosperity. We thank our friends in Edinburgh for their disinterested zeal in the business, and give them full credit for the goodness of their intentions. And should the Convention meet, as proposed, it is our heart's desire and prayer to Heaven, that the wisdom from above may direct their deliberations and the providence of the Almighty crown them with success. Your laying this before them when met, and their sustaining our reasons for not appearing with you by our delegates, will very much oblige,

Dear Sir, with all due regard and respect,

Your and their Brethren in the common cause,&c.